

# HOLY MATRIMONY

P. J. GANNON



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# HOLY MATRIMONY

BY THE REV.  
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*For we are the children of saints, and we must  
not be joined together like heathens that know  
not God.—(Book of Tobias, ch. viii. v. 5)*

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## FOREWORD

THIS volume contains the substance of six lectures on Matrimony, delivered in Gardiner Street Church, Dublin, during Lent 1927, with some few notes added for the sake of clearness or fuller explanation. Its origin explains its aim and scope, namely, to present in popular form the teaching of the Church on the more important moral and theological issues raised by the question of marriage. The Church has surely a unique claim to be consulted about these. The duty of her children to consult her is manifest, and to them primarily the present work is addressed. But many others may well be interested in Catholic doctrine on the grave problems created by the relations of the sexes. The widespread rejection of her moral code has led to certain well-known consequences, which few serious thinkers can view without alarm. Indeed, these consequences would seem to constitute a strong, if indirect, apologia for Catholic principles. The merely pragmatic argument appears, to me at least, to tell heavily in favour of the dogmatic system which has given us the Christian home and now enjoys a splendid isolation in defending it. I cannot but believe that wherever it is disappearing men and women of goodwill must feel that one of the world's loveliest ideals is passing away. Yet pass it must, if the principles on which it rests are ignored or despised.

P. J. GANNON, S.J.

MILLTOWN PARK,  
DUBLIN, September 1927.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	FOREWORD . . . . .	5
I.	MARRIAGE: A SACRED CONTRACT . . . . .	9
II.	MARRIAGE: A GREAT SACRAMENT . . . . .	26
III.	"TILL DEATH DO US PART" . . . . .	46
IV.	CONDITIONS AND IMPEDIMENTS . . . . .	71
V.	"FOR BETTER FOR WORSE" . . . . .	92
VI.	"THE UNCONSCIOUS KING" . . . . .	110



## CHAPTER I

### MARRIAGE: A SACRED CONTRACT

And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created them: male and female he created them. And God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth (Gen. i. 27, 28).

THE Protestant revolt of the sixteenth century was a great betrayal of our Christian heritage. We may say so now with all the more confidence, since the fact is generally recognised among those, at least, who retain a sincere belief in the Divinity of Christ or any love for the Church He founded. Hence the widespread longing for reunion. And the consequences of that revolt are with us still, causing a progressive disintegration of Christian civilisation. These consequences have made themselves felt in many departments of life—nay, one may well say, in all departments of life. For religion is a universal thing, colouring every thought of man's thinking, influencing every activity of his being. It would be easy to show that politics, economics, philosophy, art, literature and sociology have all suffered from the doctrinal anarchy inaugurated by Luther, Calvin, Cranmer and John Knox.

But there is one important institution of society which, more perhaps than any other, has felt the hurtful effects of the great breach with continuity; and that institution is the contract or sacrament of marriage. It could hardly well be otherwise. For the leader of the revolt was one

whose own marriage, invalidated by the twofold impediment of his priesthood and his religious profession, to a woman also bound by the vows of religion, shocked even his followers. And the so-called reformers soon found it politic to condone or approve the bigamy of a German prince; while in England the schism, which was rapidly to lead to heresy, takes its origin from the matrimonial entanglements of a sixteenth century Herod, who avoided simultaneous polygamy by the easy expedient of divorce and murder. Altogether it is an unhappy tale; and we need not be astonished that a movement with such a beginning has gone on undermining the sanctity of the home, until to-day we behold, over vast areas of the world, a state of licence and moral anarchy not far removed from that of Imperial Rome. Indeed, in certain respects the conditions outside Catholic circles, and such portions of other communions as retain some vestiges of traditional Christianity, are worse than when Juvenal wrote. Because we see from him that men still recognised vice as vice, while the peculiar feature of modern depravity is that it has often changed the labels, calling vice virtue and virtue vice.

Holy Scripture notes it as the last iniquity in a sinner that he makes excuses for his sins. But what if he glories in them? What if he invents and proclaims an ethical code abrogating or reversing that of Sinai, not to speak of the sublimer one promulgated by Christ? "Impossible," one may reply. But what actually is must be logically admitted as possible, and publications are issued every day which, under a pseudo-scientific verbiage and with all the appearance of moral earnestness, propound theories and proclaim doctrines that, if translated into plain language, would have astonished pagan ears. Moreover, societies exist, with apparently inexhaustible funds, for the popularising of these new doctrines and the spreading of the knowledge of such practices as ought to make normal humanity stand aghast. We live in strange

times, and we should recognise the fact. Literature, art and science have been enlisted on the side of the fallen angels or of fallen nature at least. I do not say *all* literature, *all* art, *all* science ; that would be untrue and unjust. But only too many who affect to speak in their name use their authority to spread what they call freedom, and perhaps regard as happiness, but what in reality is licence, leading ultimately to misery, not happiness.

These authors repudiate the stable, life-long union of man and wife. They make the primary end of that union not the birth and education of children but the gratification of sexual instinct, which they call love, but to which older and more downright generations gave a coarser name. They veil their meaning at times under euphemism or innuendo ; they obscure issues by cloudy sophistries or under specious pretexts ; they exaggerate difficulties by insisting on abnormal or exceptional instances ; they create imaginary impossibilities by denying the existence or the efficacy of that Divine succour which we call grace ; they pander to the weakness of the human heart by extolling the claims of the senses, and depreciating the claims of duty and the warnings of conscience. Above all, they present the problem in a radically false light by ignoring God and His law, by denying to man and woman an immortal soul and an eternal destiny, by reducing both to the level of apes in evolution. They thus strike at the roots of all morality. For if there be no God there is no Decalogue, or at least all adequate sanction for it disappears. If we are but apes in evolution, animal instincts are the ultimate and determining factors in conduct ; conscience becomes a figment of the brain, a source of senseless inhibitions begotten of imaginary fears. Then, indeed, Eugenics might call itself a science with some justification ; and problem plays and problem novels lay claim to a philosophic basis, instead of being, what they really are for the most part, catchpenny pornography.

But if there be a God, Whose fiat called the universe into being, Whose power sustains it and keeps it in motion, Who has made man and woman, as we read in Genesis, and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life, bestowing on them a spiritual soul and the glorious but perilous gift of moral freedom ; Who governs inanimate and irrational things by physical laws, and rational beings by moral laws, then the question is fundamentally altered. We must seek the will of the Creator as our guide, and there is none other worth a moment's consideration. That must be the ultimate criterion of our actions. That must decide the meaning and purpose of all things in life. And from it must flow those great ethical principles which are universally valid, peremptory, supreme.

It may seem strange to insist on these very elementary truths. And yet it is not unnecessary. For most errors of detail in ethical teaching will be found profoundly rooted in the errors of the system, and discussion of them will lead back inevitably to deeper questions evaded or ignored. For example, the many grave moral problems to which marriage gives rise all depend for their solution on the primary question whether you regard the man and wife as children of God or cousins to the monkey. If the former, you will search the Scriptures and consult the Church for your principles ; if the latter, your studies might begin in the zoo. And it would be well if Catholics at least would remember that all the modern anti-Christian doctrines relative to sex relationships do really take for granted the descent of man from the ape or from some common progenitor of man and ape. This should of itself suffice to make all genuine Christians reject them from the start with instinctive abhorrence. Thus a very popular and very typical pre-war author has written of himself : " I could not laugh nor engage in my old-time, lightsome persiflage with the silly, superficial chatterings of women, who, under all their softness and silliness, are as primitive in their pursuit of biological

destiny as the monkey-women were before they shed their furry coats and replaced them with the furs of other animals."

It may be said that such doctrines and principles have found no foothold in Catholic circles ; that the sanctity of marriage and its stability are in no danger there ; and hence that it is not necessary to treat of these questions at all ; in fine, that it would be better, on the principle of letting sleeping dogs lie, to leave things in their present blissful condition.

But I wonder, are things just as happy as this objection supposes ? Are we wholly uninfluenced by the wild theories and ideas that are abroad ? I do not wish to assert that as yet much harm has been done. But some has certainly been done, and there is danger of more. We read, almost exclusively, a literature which is not Catholic, and, I may now add, not Christian. We take in week by week papers and magazines in which the most subversive teaching is preached by direct statement and still more by dangerous insinuation, in which problems are opened up and discussed that should not be heard of in self-respecting circles, in which every conceivable aberration finds plausible and insidious advocacy. To say that the faithful are immune from the perils lurking in this persistent and pervasive propaganda is to shut one's eyes wilfully to facts, and to imagine that they have not fallen in Adam. But we have all fallen in Adam, and have inherited our share of the Original Sin and its consequences. And this is quite sufficient to make incumbent on us the precept of Our Lord : " Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation."

Further, it is not accounted strategy in war to wait till an enemy is within the gates and then rise to repel him. Better, far better, to meet him at the frontier or beyond and prevent him from laying waste any rood of your soil. A similar maxim holds good with regard to the dangerous evangelists of every kind now being blown about the world.

It is better to bar their ingress than, having let them enter and take root, to start eradicating them.

And there is hardly any simple subject about which more noxious errors are abroad than the question of marriage and the sex problem. Need I insist upon that? These questions have become almost an obsession of the modern mind, so that one can hardly open a paper or dip into a work of literature or see a play or film without having them obtruded on the attention. And they are rarely treated either with competence or reverence, while they are often shamelessly exploited in the interests of circulation or box receipts.

The evil which flows from all this is not immediately visible to the eye, but it is very real, and ultimately becomes very manifest. The well-being, spiritual and bodily, of the individual is at stake, and the well-being of the community likewise, for the simple reason that the community consists of individuals. The moral standards of a people determine its vitality, its creative energy, its place in history. When these fall the nation fails and eventually perishes. Now, these standards fall inevitably when the matrimonial contract is assailed or its sacred and indissoluble character denied. Both have been openly denied in the Senate of Catholic Ireland, and that fact alone seems to me to call aloud for their reaffirmation in no uncertain manner. We must make it clear that the children of the Church will not compromise on any single point of the great issues here involved. And we can only make our protest thoroughly effectual when every man and woman knows Catholic principles and strives to live up to them with a full consciousness of their importance. Hence I propose to treat of them with all the earnestness at my command, and all the frankness called for by the fact that the adversaries of Christian marriage have long abandoned earlier disguises, and are questioning, in no ambiguous language, all that we hold sacred, all that we deem necessary to keep life from

sinking to the level of animal promiscuity. It is literally a fight *pro aris et focis*, for altar and hearth, which, like man and wife, are too inseparably united to admit of real divorce.

In these pages I assume certain things. I assume, of course, the faith, and I shall content myself in the main with giving the conclusions of Catholic theology. For every single dogma which she proposes for our belief the Church has excellent arguments, philosophical and theological. But I could not possibly develop all these in the brief compass of this work. I take it for granted, therefore, that, if my readers know the Church's teaching, they will hold to it with that docility and filial confidence which our Great Mother has every right to claim from her children.

I assume also that they know the distinction between natural law—that is, the law of conduct which right reason deduces from the study of human nature—and the positive Divine law known to us by Revelation. Both are Divine in origin; both emanate from the Supreme Law-giver. But the knowledge of them comes to us in different ways. Further they are not contradictory but complementary. The law of Revelation does not set aside the law of reason. It only purifies, amplifies and elevates the ethics of reason, adding a new solemnity and enforcing them by supernatural sanctions. That is all.

I also assume that they are not the victims of the popular hallucination which derives man from the brute, and, therefore, supposes that in the beginning he was almost wholly brutish. This theory in its thorough-going and undiluted form denies our spirituality, and is heresy. But even in its diluted forms, if not heretical, it is unproven as yet. Most honest and competent scientists admit this, and call it at best a plausible hypothesis, based on data that are still inadequate. Hence when you hear that originally men and women lived in utter promiscuity, that then gradually jealousy arose and man sought the

exclusive possession of his mate ; that he first chose her by the crude expedient of stunning her with a club and carrying her off to his cave in the hills or his wigwam in the woods, slaying all the males who disputed his prize ; that gradually he mended his ways a little and bought her from her parents like an ox or a horse, with no consent on her part being asked or received ; that, finally, through long ages of polygamous unhappiness, he arrived, among the higher races, at the stage of monogamous marriage, of which even adversaries are kind enough to say that Christian matrimony is the noblest type—when you hear or read all this, as you may in cheap magazine literature and in certain works seeking to pass for the voice of science, you will please remember it is almost as romantic, and not nearly as innocent, as the story of Sinbad the Sailor or Robinson Crusoe.<sup>1</sup>

Even if it were true, the conclusion which is often implied—namely, that we ought to revert to polygamy by way of divorce or to promiscuity by way of free love—would by no means follow. Rather the contrary would follow in strict logic. But these writers love strict logic as little as strict morality.

Again, I assume that the reader will know all about the ceremony of betrothal preparatory to marriage. A preparatory engagement of some kind between two persons contemplating a life-long alliance is such an obvious dictate of good sense that it is almost universal, though the customs relating to it vary enormously. It is, of course, not strictly requisite for a legitimate contract of marriage. But it is wisely ordained to give young couples a chance of knowing one another and considering their future responsibilities, difficulties and prospects in the light of that knowledge. I will only add that the Church has laid

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph was written before Sir Arthur Keith's attempt to resuscitate the theory of our kinship with the ape. But I do not think that even his assertion can supply the missing link—or rather links, for there are many still missing and likely to remain so.

down certain formalities, without which such an engagement or betrothal has no binding force in Canon Law. These are that the promise of future matrimony must be made in writing, and signed by both parties and the priest of the parish where the espousals take place, or by the bishop of the diocese, or, failing them, by two witnesses. If both of the parties, or either of them, cannot write the necessary signature, this must be noted in the document and another witness added. These words are in themselves clear, and any further information can be obtained from a confessor or theologian. For some reason, not too obvious, this canonical betrothal is now less in fashion.

Perhaps one word more will not be out of place. Betrothal or engagement, canonical or otherwise, does not give the young couple any dispensation from the observance of the Sixth Commandment. They are still held by the obligations of celibate chastity relative to one another. Custom is inclined to be too lax on this point, and young people are prone to take too many risks—that is, to trust overmuch to their own good intentions and the sincerity of their love. They forget human frailty; and thus it happens at times that their preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony is far from edifying, far from being calculated to bring God's blessing on their union. And the danger is all the greater when, as so often happens, circumstances make the engagement drag on for a long time, perhaps for years. This is always unfortunate. But if it is inevitable one can only pity the victims of circumstances; one cannot change the law of God in their regard. Even the Church herself has not this power.

And now I come to the question of marriage itself, that fateful moment when two young beings take the irrevocable step pregnant with such possibilities of happiness or disaster.

Marriage is first of all a contract. It was so from the beginning; it will continue so to the end. It is a contract in the natural law, and remains a contract, while

becoming a Sacrament, under the law of Christ. Some years ago there was a famous matrimonial suit in the Four Courts, and during the proceedings certain eminent lawyers, who should have known better, were reported, at least, as saying that the Sacrament of Matrimony was instituted in the Garden of Eden. But all our Sacraments were instituted by Christ. Hence none of them goes back to Eden. But the contract does, and though it was not a sacrament, nor is one to-day outside the ranks of the baptised, it was and is a very solemn and even sacred contract, not just to be equated with the sale of a farm or a deal on the Stock Exchange. From its very nature it has features which distinguish it from all other contracts, and if we understand these aright we shall be saved from many erroneous conceptions—as, for example, that it can be rescinded, like these, by a change of will on the part of the contracting couple. A contract in general is effected by the consent of the parties to it, from which flow mutual rights and obligations. There are also unilateral contracts, binding only one of the parties. But these need not concern us here. This is clearly a bilateral or two-sided contract. It is more fully defined as a contract or agreement between a man and a woman, both free from matrimonial impediments, by which they bind themselves to live together and mutually give and receive the right of conjugal intercourse in acts calculated to produce offspring. This definition flows from the nature and purpose of the institution and from the words of Holy Writ ; for in Genesis we read : “ And Adam said : This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. . . . Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife : and they shall be two in one flesh ” (Gen. ii. 23, 24).

Let us dwell upon the definition a moment ; much can be derived from it. A contract supposes freedom from unjust compulsion, and, if ever there was a contract which should be free, this is one, in view of all it entails. Every

code of law recognises that a contract unjustly forced by strict constraint upon a person is null and void. It creates no obligation unless it springs from some internal consent. Freedom, therefore, is of the essence of the marriage contract; and we shall see later that the Church insists, with meticulous care, upon this freedom, and hedges it round with every safeguard.

The consent must be externally manifested. Otherwise it would not be mutually known. According to natural law it would suffice that the parties in private entered into a compact of marriage. But obviously such unlimited freedom in so important a social institution would lead to great abuses. Hence custom or law almost universally prescribes certain formalities and conditions, which, when not contrary to natural or Divine law, are binding in conscience, binding even under penalty of nullity, if such be the purpose of the custom or law. We shall see later that the Church prescribes the formalities and conditions of consent for those subject to her. But in the case of the unbaptised she recognises as valid all matrimonial contracts entered into according to the laws and customs of pagan lands, when these do not run counter to the law of God, as sometimes unfortunately happens.

The consent must be an intelligent consent to a union, the nature and purpose of which are understood. Hence, if one or other party were utterly ignorant of the meaning of marriage the consent would be inadequate. And if the ignorant party would never have consented had he or she understood what marriage meant, the contract is void. It can, however, be made good by consent given after all doubts are cleared up, and nothing more is needed than voluntary cohabitation as man and wife after these doubts are removed. Such ignorance is rare in adults of either sex, but it is not unknown. It is never presumed in ecclesiastical courts, but must be demonstrated. A general and even vague conception of the meaning of marriage suffices. It is by no means necessary that a person should

be skilled in physiology in order to contract a valid marriage. It would be well, however, especially in the case of very piously-reared young girls, that parents or guardians made sure the bride-to-be understood something of the obligations she is about to contract. Justice and charity seem to demand this.

Again, the purpose of the contract is to join the young couple in a moral union of hearts, leading to a physical union of bodies in legitimate marital intercourse. By this union two inadequate principles of life are linked up and made one adequate and indissoluble principle of life. For, let it never be forgotten, the primary end of matrimony is the propagation of the human species. Reason sees this by arguments so obvious that they need not detain us here. There are secondary ends, and very important secondary ends, such as the happiness of the married couple and the legitimate satisfaction of concupiscence. But the chief end is the one indicated; all others are subordinate, though they may loom larger in the imagination of the contracting couple. From this it follows at once that anything contrary to that end is utterly unlawful, even before the bar of reason. It is an abuse which the rational instinct of humanity recognises as such. Only inveterate and advanced depravity can question this conclusion.

But it is not enough merely to bring a child into this world. The offspring of man enters this valley of tribulation in a more pitiful state of helplessness than any other animal. It needs more care, and for a longer time, than any other, even for its bodily well-being. Its call upon the mother is so absorbing, so overwhelming, that she cannot adequately provide for it without the assistance of the father. Hence he must remain by her side, and win from earth food, shelter and raiment for both mother and babe. Further, he must stand warden of the little nest and repel external dangers. This was true at all times, and remains true in every stage of human progress. Civilisation only alters the fact in outward seeming, not in inward

reality. For the struggle for existence persists even in the highest cultures and is, at bottom, hardly less cruel than in the days of flint arrow-heads. Thus marriage is by its nature a stable union of man and woman. It would be monstrous to allow man the privilege of paternity without the obligations it imposes. Humanly speaking, what shocks us most as men in the action of the libertine who gets some unhappy girl into trouble and runs away from the consequences is just that he leaves the poor foolish thing to pay all the terrible price of their common sin. We cannot but regard him as a disgrace to our sex. He violates every code of conduct men hold in honour.

Still more, and far more, is the stable union of man and wife postulated by the spiritual needs of the child. These are, or ought to be, paramount, and, as a rule, they can only be met by the loving and loyal co-operation of both spouses. Each has a part to play in the education and moral training of the young life they have launched upon the stormy and treacherous seas of this world. And neither can quite replace the other in the task. Again, I think I need not labour this very obvious fact, which reason proclaims and experience every day affirms. One of the many arguments against divorce is just the unhappy spiritual outlook for the children, who must necessarily grow up without respect or love for one or other of the parents to whom they owe their existence.

Hence it will be seen that, as the child is Nature's purpose in marriage, the ethics of this state flow primarily from the consideration of his physical and spiritual well-being. This is the root-conception of Catholic philosophy. And it is because non-Catholic philosophy has abandoned this standpoint, taking its ground upon a weak sentimentalism and a silly glorification of what it is pleased to call love, that we find it dragging mankind to bottomless perdition. Yet in doing so it ignores the lessons of Nature hardly less than the warnings of God. For if we consider life, we see Nature rather ruthless in its pursuit of the

great purpose underlying the whole question of sex. Women attract men in youth by an evanescent beauty, which, when it has performed its function of allurement, passes with pathetic speed away. Men appeal to women by vitality, energy, courage and physical strength, which, in their case, too, soon take unto themselves wings and fly. But in the meantime, if their union is fruitful, both live again and are linked-up, in still more lasting and more spiritual bonds, in the life or lives of which they are the joint authors under God. It is children who counteract the tragic tendency to disillusionment, and even repulsion, which seems frequently to spring from what the poet calls "love's sad satiety." I know, of course, that there are melancholy instances where children may even divide. But surely they are rare. I know also, and the case, thank God ! is not rare, that affection can continue when children are denied. I know that grace can cure the natural instability and inconstancy of the heart. I gladly grant that long years spent in common, joys and triumphs shared in common, difficulties overcome in common, and, perhaps most of all, sorrows borne in common can often knit two souls as one in a spiritual love which is all the more beautiful as the physical reasons for it decline or die away. Yet the fact remains : In general, when the season of youth is over and the hey-day in the blood is tame ; when he has discovered to his vast surprise that she is no longer "a daughter of the gods . . . and most divinely fair " ; when she has had the amazing fact forced upon her that he is not a Perseus or an Arthur, ready to brave all dangers of land and sea or face all monsters of the deep for her dear sake ; when for him the sweetly-smiling, sweetly-prattling Lalage of the honeymoon has been metamorphosed by Time's black magic into a plain, middle-aged matron, whom not even bobbed hair, or the Eton crop, or abbreviated skirts can make young again, and whose prattling has changed from love's music into empty chatter getting on his nerves ; when for her his

athletic frame has vanished down the gulf of dreams and his conversation lost its ancient charm ; when domestic cares have bleached her hair and seamed her face with wrinkles ; when his fight with fate and outward circumstance has taken the elasticity out of his step and quenched the fire of resolution in his eye—ah ! then a pair or more of youthful arms are of incalculable worth to hold two hearts together in bonds that shall not be merely chains. In her daughters she lives again for him. In his sons he is still for her as young as Adonis, as brave as Cuchulain. A purpose in life remains for both ; hopes for the future still feed the hearts of both ; nerve the courage and cement the love of both, till resting in some child's arms they pass away.

Do not tell me this is merely poetry or rhetoric ; not reality. Do not say I am painting a fanciful picture of an unrealised ideal. I am only depicting what you will find in thousands of homes within the frontiers of this small land. And it is not superfluous to insist upon it. In reading the literature of the day one would gather the impression that conjugal love had passed from earth, and that all married couples, after a few years, dragged a lengthening chain which was slowly strangling them. But is it true ? I know, of course, that all or nearly all couples have their difficulties. I can well imagine that the same face over the same breakfast table, day-in day-out, for, let us say, ten or twenty years is no small trial of patience. I take it for granted that many a difference of opinion will turn her voice shrill and his look sour. But there is an old Irish proverb which says : “ It is better to be quarrelsome than lonesome.” And when the baby is ill, all else is forgotten. When Mary shines in her Confirmation veil, or Sean returns at Christmas with a prize from school, perhaps for Christian Doctrine, or Desmond leads his team to victory in the school cup, hands that had forgotten to clasp are joined again ; perhaps even lips meet again that had not met since the scene over the hard-

boiled eggs or the millinery bill, or the mud he carried on his boots into the parlour. Hence I repeat, children are not merely the end of marriage and its justification. They are its crown and glory. They unite the parents as nothing else can ; and they prove its necessary stability and permanence. They cry out against its dissolubility, and mark it off as a lifelong union, not lightly to be entered into and never to be dissolved. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The nature and properties of any great and universal institution are to be deduced from its intrinsic purpose and general operation, not from occasional failures or secondary ends. Hence in this matter there can be no exceptions. Tamper with the marriage bond and experience teaches that reasons for divorce are multiplied until an English judge can suggest, ironically, the desirability of issuing *decrees nisi* postage stamps as a source of revenue ; or, finally, the conditions of Soviet Russia supervene, where mere cohabitation, without formalities of any kind and terminable at the whim of either party, has been declared to constitute marriage. Many years ago, in a book entitled *Anticipations*, Mr. H. G. Wells, a typical herald of revolt, wrote : "The institution of permanent monogamous marriage—except in the ideal Roman Catholic community, where it is based upon the sanction of an authority which in real Roman Catholic countries a large proportion of the men refuse to obey—is sustained at present entirely by the inertia of custom and by a number of sentimental and practical considerations, that may very possibly undergo modifications in the face of the altered relationship of husband and wife that the present development of childless ménages is bringing about. The practical and sustaining reason for monogamy is the stability it gives to the family ; the value of a stable marriage lies in the orderly upbringing in an atmosphere of affection that it secures in most cases for its more or less numerous offspring. The monogamous family has indisputably been

the civilising unit in the pre-mechanical civilised state. . . . But how does this fit into the childless, disunited and probably shifting ménage of our second picture? Will a generation to whom marriage will be no longer necessarily associated with the birth and rearing of children, or with the immediate co-operation of husband and wife in common proceedings, retain its present feeling for the extreme sanctity of the permanent bond? . . . It is foolish not to anticipate a state of things when not only will moral standards be shifting and uncertain, but also when vice and depravity, in every form that is not absolutely penal, will be practised in every grade of magnificence and condoned."

He was right. He knew what was coming. His own works, I fear, have contributed their quota to the moral anarchy that we see spreading rapidly wherever Catholic principles are denied. But that anarchy only shows how sound they are, and how necessary for the moral well-being of mankind.

Now these principles assert that even the natural contract is indissoluble by any civil authority. It is true, of course, and notorious that the State in many lands claims this power. But Catholic teaching repudiates the right of the Mikado to dissolve the marriage of his pagan subjects as decisively as it would reject any claim by Spanish law courts to dissolve the sacramental contract of 'Catholic Spaniards. Such legislation only gives an outward show of legality to what is really against natural and Divine law. For reason proclaims that this is, or ought to be, a lifelong union of one man and one woman; and Our Divine Lord has said: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

## CHAPTER II

### MARRIAGE : A GREAT SACRAMENT

This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in  
the Church (Eph. v. 32).

We have seen that, from the beginning and by its very nature, marriage was a solemn and even sacred contract inaugurating a lifelong union between the spouses, in which they become one flesh—that is, one adequate principle of life. We have seen that reason, if rightly used, points to the conclusion that it is indissoluble: either intrinsically—that is, by the will of the parties; or extrinsically—that is, by civil authority. Reason also teaches the equality of the sexes, and repudiates the right of one man to have more wives than one at the same time, and, still more clearly, the right of one woman to have more than one husband simultaneously. Both are obviously abuses, as all will admit. For no one can deny that the harem and zenana are unfair or degrading to woman, while leading to perpetual discord and intrigue within the home. Even agnostics admit that polygamy is a lower stage of evolution, and should pass away. And that one woman should be held in common by several men revolts our human instincts, and has such evil consequences, detrimental even to the primary purpose of matrimony, that theologians deny to God Himself the power of sanctioning it.

But passion has often and in many places so obscured the teaching of the natural law that customs have arisen contravening even its most solemn precepts. Blindness of vision can flow from obduracy of heart, and widespread

depravity can pervert the principles of morality implanted by God in the soul of man. So true is this that the Vatican Council teaches the moral need of supernatural revelation, in the present condition of mankind, in order that men in general might, easily and with certitude, acquire a firm and unerring knowledge of the complete law of nature. History vouches for the fact that man, left to his own devices, has fallen into the grossest errors, not merely in conduct, but in thought. There is hardly any ethical perversion that has not found defenders in one or other school of that philosophy which refuses to receive enlightenment from Divine Revelation. That Revelation, inaugurated in the Old Testament, completed in the Christian dispensation, and confided to the infallible Church for safeguarding and elucidation, is the one clear lighthouse for mankind, which lifts its head above the storms and sends its rays across the world.

To this, then, we must look for the decisive teaching that shall guide us in all vexed questions of ethics. Against such teaching no arguments of sentiment or passion can be allowed to prevail. They may seem plausible, especially to untrained minds, they may make a powerful appeal to the infirmity of the unhappy and the sorely tempted ; but they have simply no validity against the voice of God vouched for by the Church. You know, of course, that the teaching claims of the Church are denied by countless millions outside her fold. But the proofs for them are given elsewhere, and must be supposed here. I will only ask you to look around at the results of their denial, and you will have a strong practical argument in their favour. Very particularly consider what happens in regard to sexual morality when Revelation is rejected and the Church's authority spurned. "The Great God Pan," with his sly leer, comes wandering back from the glades of ancient Greece, replacing "The Pale Galilean" in men's devotion ; Aphrodité is seen once more rising from the foam of the sea ; Ishtar, or Astaroth, and all the

sultry deities of the ancient Orient have shrines erected to them under the very shadows of the Gothic minsters, once raised by piety for the pure worship of Jehovah.

From Revelation, then, we learn that Christ, the Divine legislator, first recalled the Jews to the primitive severity of God's law, abrogating the bill of divorce conceded by Moses to the hard-necked and rebellious Jews. From it also we learn that He made the marriage contract a sacrament in the case of all who should enter His Church by Baptism. Henceforward it is chiefly the sacramental contract we shall have in view.

A sacrament, in general, is an outward or visible sign instituted by Christ to signify grace and confer the grace it signifies upon the recipient. It is of defined faith that there are seven such sacraments, and that Matrimony is one of them. Thus the Council of Trent says: "If anyone denies that Matrimony is really and truly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law instituted by Christ, or that it confers grace, let him be anathema." The same had been previously taught in the Council of Florence, where East and West were united, and earlier still, against the Albigenses, in the Council of Verona. For the Albigenses, like the Manichæans and some other earlier sects, had assailed the sacred character of matrimony, but without much serious effect.

Indeed, the first really grave denial of this doctrine within the bosom of Christianity is due to Protestantism, which changed the definition of a sacrament and then reduced their number to two or three. According to Luther, "marriage is an entirely worldly affair, like clothes, food, house and land." According to Calvin it is "a good and holy ordinance of God; but agriculture, architecture, cobbling and hair-cutting are legitimate ordinances of God without being sacraments." According to Melanchton and Chemnitz it is a command of God to which is annexed a promise of grace, but it does not confer grace *ex opere operato*. Subsequent Protestants regard

it as a sacred institution, but not a sacrament in the same sense as Baptism or the Eucharist; it is a minor sacrament, not a major one. I need hardly add that later Liberal Protestantism has gone on lowering its dignity and denying its indissolubility until it is hard to see what sacredness is left; while Modernism, here as elsewhere, breaks with Church tradition, and teaches that it was not regarded as a sacrament from the beginning of Christianity.

But the Catholic Church, East and West, including even those Eastern communities that embraced heretical teaching on other points, has persistently affirmed the sacramental nature of this contract in the case of all Christians. When the Protestant churches of the West sought to enlist the Eastern churches in their denial of this doctrine, they were met by a decisive repudiation. It follows, then, that whenever two baptised persons marry, their contract is also a sacrament conferring on them the special graces needed for their state, provided, of course, that their dispositions do not make them unworthy of grace. In this case they receive the sacrament, sacramentally, indeed, but validly. They can later repent of their sins, and the graces, wanting at the start, are given when the obstacles are removed.

Thus you will observe that, so far from assailing the validity or sacred character of Protestant marriage, as is so often asserted, Catholic teaching goes far beyond Protestant theology by proclaiming it a sacrament in the fullest sense of the word. Therefore, if non-Catholic Christians, who are in good faith in their beliefs, enter matrimony with the requisite dispositions of soul, particularly supernatural sorrow for any sins they may have committed, they not only contract a legitimate union, but obtain the sacramental graces annexed to this rite by Christ Himself. Those who have never been baptised cannot receive the sacrament, but their contract is legitimate, and even sacred. It is also indissoluble, however much they may think otherwise, unless they make its

dissolubility a strict condition of their consent, in which case their consent would not be truly matrimonial consent at all.<sup>1</sup>

The sixteenth-century Reformers objected that this doctrine cannot be proved from Scripture. Our first answer is that the written tradition of Sacred Scripture is not the only source of our knowledge of Revelation. It suffices, on Catholic principles, that a doctrine be contained in the oral tradition of the Church as revealed of God. Hence, even if we had no indications in the New Testament of its sacramental character, we should be still justified in holding it revealed on the word of the Church. This principle is established in other treatises of theology, and is taken for granted here. Yet even in Scripture proof is not wanting, though its probative force is variously appraised. Christ honoured by His presence the marriage feast of Cana, making it the occasion of His first miracle; some authors have supposed, on slender grounds, that He instituted the sacrament there. He also withdrew the Mosaic Bill of Divorce, and proclaimed marriage indissoluble in texts that we shall have to consider later. But the principal passage cited for our thesis is from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (chap. v. 22-32): "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord. Because the husband is the head of the wife: as Christ is the head of the Church. He is the saviour of his body.

<sup>1</sup> This was the condition which rendered the Marconi-O'Brien marriage null and void. See *Irish Times*, May 6, 1927: "Senator Marconi met the Hon. Beatrice O'Brien in Dorsetshire twenty-four years ago. He asked her to become his wife; but her mother objected, saying that so many weddings turned out badly that she refused to let her daughter marry if the bond was indissoluble, as it was for Catholics. The difficulty was only overcome by Senator Marconi entering into an agreement, not only with the Hon. Beatrice O'Brien, but also with her mother and with the whole family, whereby it was expressly stated that either party could sue for divorce at any time he or she thought fit." Contrast with this the Code, Canon 1086 § 2: "If either parties or both by a positive act of will exclude . . . any essential property of matrimony the contract is invalid."

Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life. . . . So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church. . . . For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church."

At first sight it might appear as if the last verse were conclusive in favour of our contention. But the original Greek words, more closely translated, run: "This mystery is great: I mean with regard to Christ and the Church." And in this form they do not incontrovertibly assert that Matrimony is a sacrament. Theologians argue rather from the drift of the whole passage. The union between man and wife is compared to the union between Christ and the Church He founded. Now, such a comparison must have seemed somewhat startling in that Græco-Roman world, which had degraded marriage in an indescribable way. Yet St. Paul says it ought to resemble the mystic union between Christ and the Church, from which the latter derives all its holiness. It ought to produce a similarly permanent and sanctifying bond. Hence, as the union between Christ and His Spouse confers grace, so, theologians argue, marriage also not only symbolises but confers grace. Yet, even so formulated, the argument can hardly be called compelling, and the Council of Trent is content to say that the sacramental nature of marriage is here hinted at rather than explicitly asserted.

When we seek to study the question in the light of Patristic tradition, it is again complicated by the fact that the word sacrament had not yet acquired the precise, technical meaning which it bears in later centuries, and is

used now in a looser, now in a stricter, sense. But certain things are clear. The attitude of the Early Church towards marriage stands in the sharpest contrast to the ideas prevailing in the Pagan world. Charity and chastity were the two outstanding virtues which palpably differentiated Christians from the corrupt society in which they lived. Even the marriages of slaves, barely tolerated by Roman law, were as sacred and holy in the eyes of the Church as those of the noblest patricians. And Christian marriage was deemed so sacrosanct and so indissoluble that, for a long time and in wide circles, a strong prejudice prevailed against the second marriage of a widow or widower. The Church eventually condemned this excessive rigorism. But its presence shows how stable and enduring the bond was reputed when it was questioned if even death dissolved it.

It is obviously impossible here to cite the Fathers at any satisfactory length. I must content myself with saying that in general marriage in their writings is seen to be (1) a sacred institution pertaining to the care of the Church and under its discipline; (2) sanctified and consecrated in a special manner by Christ Himself, Who is depicted in ancient art as joining the hands of the espousing couple, with the inscription: "The Grace of God"; (3) enriched by special graces, and therefore a sacrament, the violation of which by any infidelity is a sacrilege. A few brief citations will indicate how the Early Fathers and Church authorities speak on this subject. Origen writes: "It is God Who has joined two in one . . . and because He has done so grace is upon those whom He has joined." Tertullian declares marriage to have "the patronage of Divine grace"—"to be proclaimed by the angels and ratified by the Father in Heaven." St. Ambrose says of the adulterer that "by his sin he loses his part in a celestial sacrament," and, elsewhere, that "it was sanctified by Christ," and yet again, in another place, that it "must be hallowed by benediction and veiling at the hands of the

priest." St. Siricius, Pope, proclaims that "it is a sacrilege among believers, if the blessing which the priest imparts is violated by any transgression." St. Augustine compares Matrimony among Christians to Baptism and Orders, because, from Christ's institution, there is a sacramental character in it wanting in other marriages. St. Chrysologus exclaims: "O happy marriage at which Christ is present." Surely the later definitions of Florence and Trent are only in line with these and the many other utterances of the Fathers extolling the holiness of Christian wedlock.

And now we may pause a moment to dwell upon the consequences of what we have said. Marriage is a sacrament which applies to the soul the merits of Christ. I wonder do the young couples, who are both the ministers and the recipients of this sacrament, always realise the sacredness of the moment, and the interior dispositions of heart which they should bring to it. They are entering into an alliance blest by Christ Himself, which symbolises His own Incarnation and His union with His Spouse the Church. They are assuming responsibility, as far as nature permits, for bringing into being not merely denizens of this world but candidates for the future City of God. Their relations will in due course, if fruitful, produce a set of circumstances that call for a direct creative act of God, and an immortal human soul will, from the first moment of conception, animate a tiny particle of matter, endowing it with the utterly mysterious power of growth and development, which will, in less than a year's time, usher into the light of day a new inheritor of our high and glorious but chequered destiny. Surely this thought should subdue by its solemnity all the merely frivolous fancies by which this sacred rite is sometimes degraded. Surely it should transmute mere physical desire into something nobler, and higher far than that which moves the animal world. Surely it should enable rational creatures to rise above lower analogies, and take their duties seriously even while

welcoming the privileges that the union gives. Are the words that the Angel addressed of old to Tobias too austere for followers of Christ, who pray to Mary, and are fed with the Body of the Lord : “ Take the virgin with the fear of God, moved rather through love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in thy children ” ? Or the words of Tobias himself : “ For we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God ” ?

They must, indeed, be sorry beings who at such a moment think only of their own happiness and their own gratification. I cannot imagine anything more repellent, I do not say to the conscience of a Christian, but even to the honour of man or the dignity of woman, than that the hour of marriage should find in either heart a wish to acquire the natural privileges of the state without facing fairly and squarely the obligations which nature itself proclaims, and God ordains, and the destiny of mankind demands.

Now of all these the first, the most obvious, the most compelling, is to respect life and the processes that produce life. Any interference with these is either murder, murder most foul, or that other crime which God Himself in Genesis is seen to have punished by immediate death.

Alas ! that it should be necessary to refer to such an iniquity at all. But do not blame me. Blame rather the unnatural and cynical depravity of an age when, in defiance of instinct, reason and Revelation, men and women are found not only to practise such wickedness in private, but to preach it in public and defend it as lawful—nay as incumbent and postulated by the narrowness of the earth, not yet half-peopled, or by the claims of higher comfort, higher culture, or the higher status of women—every single statement a lie emanating from the Father of Lies.

Of all the crimes that cry aloud to heaven for vengeance and provoke the patience of God, this seems to me one of the most reprehensible. And if we reflect a moment we

shall see that it has given us the Great War. France—that is, the apostate elements in France, which we must not identify with the whole nation though they constitute a far too large proportion of it—had specialised in this abomination. And, lo ! from a cloudless sky, in August 1914, the lightning of God's anger fell. The Germans were not wholly guiltless in this respect ; but they had seventy millions of population when France had only forty millions, and that thirty millions of a difference told.

When in those autumnal days, now nearly thirteen years ago, the trumpets sounded the call to arms over all the fair land of France, and the tocsin of death rang out even from the belfries of the neglected churches, I wonder what those parents felt whose only son marched out to answer that imperious summons, and waved his képi to them for the last time as he set his face eastward for the red inferno flaring up along the whole line of conflict from Liège to Belfort. I speak, of course, only of such parents as had a single son, not through Nature's fault, but through their own. What must have been their thoughts in those intolerable hours of suspense, when all they knew was that their only child was out yonder in the dense fog of war, from which the unceasing roar of the guns came floating to them on the Eastern wind, like the trumpets of the Apocalypse heralding in the Day of Judgment. And it was a day of judgment for their country and their race. Yea, for a whole world order, for a civilisation that had been long slipping down Avernian slopes and now shot outward over the sheer abyss.

When the great tragedy was being enacted we were summoned, even here in distant Ireland, which had nothing to say to the causes of the conflict, to shoulder a musket and save civilisation. But what a civilisation ! Was it worth saving ? Or is it saved ? Or can it be saved if God's anger is upon it, as upon the Cities of the Plains ? No, neither Geneva nor Locarno can save it, unless there be a great and universal change of heart: “ Unless the Lord

buildeth the city, they labour in vain who build it." And what sign is there that He is even called into council in the various efforts at reconstruction which we behold? So far are men from learning the lesson of the disaster, that we are coolly told it was due to the fact that Germany had too many cradles, not that France had too few. Hence it would follow that the only way to avoid the holocaust of the world's youth in war is for all nations to make a holocaust of their babes unborn. Satan's logic, surely, and the logic of satanic men!

Here at least, in an island sanctified by fifteen centuries of unbroken Christian tradition, let it not be heard. Here, if only here in all the world, let us stand fast and stop our ears to the unholy pleading. Hitherto we have never listened to it. We have our faults, no doubt, and we have heard of them often enough. Our enemies have examined our conscience for us, and, in hours of pessimism, we have been unsparing enough of self-denunciation. But at any rate we have never practised race suicide. Indeed, I think all our other crimes would have been pardoned by our adversaries if we had done this. But, though we had every temptation that narrow borders and unexampled poverty could suggest, we have not been guilty of this defiance of Divine law.

The witty Mr. Dooley once said to his friend, Mr. Hinnessy, during one of those periodic outcries in New England about the declining birth-rate among the descendants of those who sailed in the *Mayflower*: "Do you know, Mr. Hinnessy, as I walked through the Irish quarters the other day, a terrible thought came to me. I said to myself: 'We Irish in America are doomed. We're dying out; we're dying out of overcrowding.'" Well, a nation takes a long time to die out of overcrowding. In all our cities we have the problem of overcrowding; and it is a serious one which, I hope, will be tackled energetically. Let us by all means bestir ourselves, and cover the land with more fitting abodes in more suitable surroundings,

where the eyes of childhood may open on the sunshine, their young feet stray amid the grasses, their laughter waken the echoes of the hillsides, their limbs acquire strength and grace in the wide spaces, where the winds range and the heather blooms and the peat-brown rivers flow. But meantime, and at all times, let us remember that in its children are centred a nation's hopes. Let us honour the cradle, even though it be in an attic, and respect the perambulator and go-cart, even though they be made out of an empty tea-chest and abandoned bicycle wheels. They carry a son of man, and you will recall that God Incarnate found no more beloved title for Himself than this, "The Son of Man," and that as a baby His cradle was a manger, and His home a carpenter's workshop.

Another obligation resulting from the marriage contract is that of lifelong fidelity to one another. And this is equally binding on both. For Christianity, unlike Paganism, which has commonly sanctioned or condoned polygamy and concubinage—nay, any licence—on the part of man, asserts, in unequivocal terms, the equality of the sexes in wedlock, and teaches that adultery is as grievous a sin on the husband's part as on the wife's. It is a two-fold sin, mortal in both respects, against chastity and against justice. It is true that public opinion in many lands frowns more sternly on the infidelity of the wife. And we must admit that there is an important difference in her case. For not only does she sin against his right to her undivided allegiance, but she runs the risk of perpetrating another very cruel injustice—namely, of imposing on one man the child of another. Yet that does not prevent the husband's infidelity from being an equally base and criminal violation of the contract.

And there is another aspect of this question, not sufficiently pondered or understood. Wherever an easy tolerance of the husband's delinquencies prevails, there are created for the innocent wife and her offspring dangers so

terrible that one shudders to think of them. In general, libertinage means relations with the unhappy Hagar's of society, those pitiful victims of man's immorality who take a dreadful revenge upon the community that fosters them, by spreading secretly under the smooth surface of respectability those foul diseases which we shrink from naming. Only too often women, with generations of clean ancestry behind them and irreproachable personal lives, are infected in their very veins and condemned to bear a tainted progeny through the sins of their husbands. Doctors know this as none others can. And I must be pardoned if I allude to it.

“ Sorrow follows wrong,  
As echo follows song,  
On, and on, and on.”

Nor is there any form of wrong-doing more inexorably, more mysteriously, pursued by the Furies than sexual sin. Unhappily also, it is not only the guilty who suffer at times.

If there is one advice to be given to the young, innocent girl it is this : Do not, as you value your happiness, your peace of mind, your health of body, the future of your children, or even your immortal soul, do not, oh, do not, marry the rake. Do not heed his flattery, do not trust his promises, do not conceive you have a vocation to rescue him from his sins. The price may well be more than you can dream of, or would bargain for, if you understood. Let him work out his repentance by conquering those devouring passions which he has pampered, and which have rendered him unfit to be your spouse. If they have not already laid the seeds of physical as well as moral ruin, what guarantee have you that they will not do so in the future ? “ Oh, but I am sure he loves me,” she will probably reply ; “ and will be good henceforth *in sæcula sæculorum.*” Poor child ! Has she any idea of the raging, insatiable fire which vice sets up in a libertine's veins, or any idea of the instability of his resolution ? Even if he

means well now, what about ten years hence, when his present passion, little different, if all be known, from that which drove him into other and polluted arms before, has died away, and there is nothing to hold him loyal except a sense of duty, which he has not got, or a spiritual affection, of which he is incapable? I would add, also, do not marry the drunkard, for the two-fold reason that drunkenness and married happiness are incompatible, and that through drunkenness even otherwise chaste men are often led into marital infidelity.

And parents and guardians of young girls should ask themselves much more searchingly what manner of man the suitor is, than what income he possesses, or what his prospects are, or of what lineage he descends. How many splendid girls are sold, or sell themselves, not merely into bondage, but unto death—lingering death, monstrous death—little guessing what it all means. Neither let it be said: “But what are we to do? There are so few model men about, and they in particular are hard to win. The very best that offer have something amiss; so that if we are too critical we shall be left in our state of ‘single blessedness’ till the end of the chapter.”

Well, what of that? Better the loneliness of the old maid than the loneliness of the deserted wife. Better anything than the lot of the woman tied to a man who, having sown wild oats, has reaped the infected crop that springs from such unhallowed planting. I speak in metaphor, because I shrink from plainer speech.

And to all such men I say: How dare you dream of taking to your bosom any decent girl of any condition of life? You have no right to do such a thing. You have reaped as you have sown; and now the only expiation you can offer to God is to limit the devastation of your punishment to yourself. “The soul that sinneth, the same shall die.” Of the body, too, it may well be said: The body that sinneth, and in sinning contracteth death, the same shall die. Let it not commit murder as well. Neither

imagine that gold can gild the crime. No wealth and no position are compensation to any woman for such a wrong as this. In Judaea of old lepers were bound to quit the haunts of their fellowmen and cry out as these came near : “Unclean ! unclean !” There is a leprosy eating into the very vitals of society to-day. But as yet we have not driven the infected into the waste places with any warning brand upon their brow. Perhaps it will yet come to that, when the extent and the consequences of this leprosy are more fully known.

The relatives of prodigals are often to blame in this matter. They are rightly anxious that these should reform ; and so, in their misguided zeal, they fix upon some young, unlessoned girl, fresh perhaps from convent cloisters, and allot to her the task of winning the prodigal back from that far land, shrouded with darkness and the shades of death, where he has “wasted his substance with harlots.” Now, in the parable we read that the father slew the fatted calf upon the prodigal’s return. We do not read that he slew some neighbour’s child, hoping to secure his return. And there are parents and relatives of prodigals who have worse than murdered some utterly unsuspecting neighbour’s child. Yea, what is more, they have quite congratulated themselves on their achievement and drugged themselves with the illusion that they have done something pleasing to God. But they may have to face a rude awakening when the scales are set for judgment and their works are weighed. To me, on the contrary, it seems that Herod’s treatment of the Innocents was guiltless by the side of this. I assume, of course, that they have acted with full knowledge of the facts and the probable consequences, as is too often the case.

Yet another obligation arises from the matrimonial bond, that of living in common and according one another mutual marital rights. This is a solemn obligation binding both parties, which cannot be set aside except by the free consent of both. The husband may not without necessity

quit his wife, nor the wife her husband. Where he is she should be, and *vice versa*. The separate establishments, common enough among the wealthier classes, at least in other lands, are a rank abuse and the source of numerous sins. They end only too frequently in the divorce court. I know that the duty of cohabitation will involve hardships and sacrifices at times. I know that circumstances may even render it impossible for a period or periods. This is always to be deplored, and only grave reasons can justify it—certainly, not the reluctance of a girl to quit city life for the loneliness of the country, or to leave the homeland for another—nor the desire of the husband for a return to the freedom of bachelor days, or the craving for travel and adventure. Egotism has grown to such inordinate proportions in our modern world, and neurotic restlessness has so blunted the sense of responsibility, that it is astonishing what frivolous pleas are urged for running away from the gravest obligations. I have heard of a lady who could not live in a certain lovely country mansion on account of the laurels that grew around it. Hence she rarely quitted London. Others will find the air of a certain locality too relaxing, or, failing that, too bracing for their delicate constitutions. So the husband may face the danger, and she will live with her people, or in a city flat within reach of the theatres, the ball-rooms, the bridge parties, and the concerts that have been her life. Often enough it is through folly of this kind that the third party enters the undefended citadel of the home. Many a wife has chiefly herself to blame, if a husband, unfairly treated, finds company at other and forbidden hearths. Many a husband creates serious temptation for the neglected wife to open the door to a dangerously friendly consoler.

But this claim to cohabitation, with its attendant rights and privileges, is not absolute. It may be lost. The unfaithful spouse forfeits it, and for ever, unless the injured party wishes to condone the sin. The drunken spouse forfeits it, while he or she remains in that state. The

wastrel, idle husband forfeits it, who will not work for his family. The diseased who may communicate disease, the demented while demented, the brutally cruel who make the partner's life a misery, cannot claim the rights of the state. For these and similar reasons the Church grants a separation, though she cannot grant a divorce. She endeavours, however, first of all to correct the erring one, and often advises all possible patience on the other one's part before proceeding to the drastic step of breaking up the home—a last and always regrettable expedient.

To men in particular I would add: Chivalry and tenderness and patient sympathy are needed, if the matrimonial yoke is not to become almost intolerable to the wife, on whom it presses with very unequal weight. Herbert Spencer once wrote: "In the history of humanity, as written, the saddest part concerns the treatment of women, and, had we before us its unwritten history, we should find this part sadder still. . . . The amount of suffering which has been, and is, borne by women is utterly beyond imagination."

I fear this is only too true. And nothing is more wonderful or more admirable than the courage of the sex, which, in spite of its weakness and the known inconstancy of man, can boldly trim the sails of its frail bark and adventure out upon the perilous and unexplored sea of wedded life. It reminds one of the fine daring of that Irish yachtsman who a few years ago set out in a small ketch to circumnavigate the world. Indeed, one can well understand that many a girl shrinks from the ordeal, and deliberately prefers to earn her own living and preserve her liberty. No one can blame her, and, provided she observes faithfully the laws of the unmarried state, the Church does not blame her. She is free, entirely free; and the Church not only respects her liberty but safeguards it in every possible way. For you will find in general that the Church, which is so often assailed as the

enemy of human liberty, is, on the contrary, its most consistent champion and defender.

Catholic theology is perpetually engaged in steering a middle course between violent extremes and opposing fanaticisms. Thus in the present instance its teaching is really wonderfully sane and beautifully harmonious. For it proclaims, on the one hand, that celibacy and virginity, embraced for supernatural motives, constitute a higher state than that of wedlock. Even if embraced for merely human but honourable motives, the single state is free to all who live up to its obligations. This last the Church insists on always, not only in outward act but in inward thought and desire. Yet, on the other hand, she will hear no word against matrimony. She knows that the married state is necessarily the vocation of the vast majority of her children, and she crowns it with her benediction and her praise. She sees in it the natural means of her increase. She looks to it to help her in her difficult task of peopling heaven with the elect. She realises only too well that in the sanctified home alone can she build up a barrier against the wild tide of turbulent passion always seeking to engulf the world. The only thing she says to men and women is this: You cannot have it both ways. You cannot enjoy the liberty of the unmarried and the gratification of that instinct which is meant to lead to marriage, and therein alone can find legitimate satisfaction. Nor can you, on the other hand, possess the privileges of this state and evade its obligations. Now make your choice and abide by your decision. "Those who marry do well and those who don't do better," provided that the motives of choice are the right ones, and that the implications of the choice are fully understood and loyally accepted. Can you improve on that as a working principle of human life? Or, rather, can you tinker with it in either direction or any direction without undermining all sexual morality, without dragging men and women down to the level of the beasts or below it?

It is a curious and significant thing that the very same sixteenth century heretics who inveighed against monasticism and celibacy, should also have been the first really dangerous adversaries of sacramental marriage. And that the Church, which, in the teeth of a world's sneers and slanders, asserts the higher dignity and holiness of that state which all must embrace who would serve at her altar or enter into her most hallowed sanctuaries, should also teach simultaneously the liceity and sacramental character of marriage among her children. Or, again, that a priesthood, which at its ordination puts marriage for ever outside its power to contract, should be the only teaching body to-day to hold the lists in defence of the great sacrament it may never receive. Yet, if one considers the matter a little, he will see a deep, inner fitness in this apparent paradox. It is the Sacrament of Matrimony that gives us the Sacrament of Orders. Nor do I mean anything so obvious as that a man must be born to be a priest. For he must be born to be anything; and men would still appear on the earth if sacramental marriage were to disappear, which is now, thank God! impossible. I mean rather that only in homes founded by a sacrament, and therefore blest by religion at the start, and in which religion creates the whole atmosphere of the child's life, only there can youth learn that self-control, that temperance in pleasure, that fear of God and love of God without which the white, austere ideal of celibacy and virginity would for ever remain a vague, celestial, far-off aspiration, such as inspired even the pagan poet Euripedes to one of his loveliest choral odes, but remained, and must always remain, unattainable by fallen nature wherever the grace of Christ does not enter in. Hence we are only paying a debt of gratitude to those who not only begot us according to the flesh, but also brought us forth unto God through Baptism, when we preach, as indeed in any event we must, that their union was not merely a natural contract but "a great sacrament. I speak in

Christ and in the Church." It is not the greatest of the sacraments; for the Eucharist towers among the seven in unapproachable splendour. But it is a great sacrament, hallowing the very origin of life, and so important for life that I make bold to assert Christianity itself would disappear without it.

## CHAPTER III

### “TILL DEATH DO US PART”

“What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”  
(Mark x. 9).

FROM the fact that marriage among Christians is a Sacra-  
ment flow certain important consequences, which we  
must examine now. The first of these is that it is wholly  
under the jurisdiction of the Church. She, and she alone,  
can legislate about this sacramental contract itself, as dis-  
tinct from its merely civil effects. She, and she alone, can  
determine what conditions, if any, are to be laid down for  
its validity; what restrictions, if any, are to be put upon  
the wide liberty of choice left by the natural law. She,  
and she alone, can set up impediments, whether diriment  
—that is, invalidating, or impedient—that is, prohibitive  
merely. In other words, she says to the State :—

I grant that in the case of pagan subjects, never affiliated to  
me by Baptism, you have certain powers to regulate this contract,  
in the interests of the common good and within the limits of  
the natural law. You cannot, of course, allow what God and  
Nature forbid, nor forbid what they enjoin. But you can, as  
in the case of other contracts, legislate to ensure justice and  
restrain licence, to provide for social order and protect social  
morality, to determine more clearly what natural law leaves  
vague—or rather, to apply its large general precepts to the  
particular conditions of your people, always, however, having in  
mind their temporal and spiritual welfare. And your enact-  
ments are binding on such subjects of yours—binding even, if  
so you decree, under pain of nullity. But in the case of my  
spiritual subjects all this power is taken out of your hands; it  
is mine, and mine by the donation of God. That is my claim.

A bold claim it may seem to many—a claim which the State in many times and places has challenged, and challenges to-day wherever State-worship, the most prevailing form of idolatry in the modern world, has replaced the worship of Christ. Yet it follows logically and inevitably from Catholic principles, according to which the contract of marriage among Christians is the sacrament and the sacrament is the contract.

This teaching is now certain. It was questioned in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by a few quite orthodox theologians, and also by others less orthodox, who, for their leaning towards the claims of the State as against those of the Church, were known as "Aulici" or courtier theologians. Thus, one of the most eminent of those who attended the Council of Trent taught that the contract was the matter of the sacrament and the blessing of the priest the form, with the consequence that the priest was the minister of the sacrament, not the contracting couple. Others followed more or less his views, some, like him, still vindicating to the Church alone the right to establish impediments, others using the doctrine to accord to the State rights it never possessed. We need not follow the controversy through its history. It has long died down in the schools, and no theologian now does or can maintain a real distinction, adequate or inadequate, between the contract and the sacrament. In the case of Christians they are one; and Leo XIII., in his Encyclical "Arcanum Dei," 1897, was only giving authoritative sanction on this point to teaching long agreed upon by theologians and canonists alike.

From all this it follows that the contracting parties are both ministers and recipients of this sacrament, the priest only the authorised witness, required, however, now for the validity of the contract (except in some extraordinary cases provided for by Canon Law), and, finally, that this sacramental contract is entirely under the jurisdiction of the Church. It was to the Church, and not to the State, that

Christ entrusted all His seven sacraments ; she has as much power over this as over any other. The State might as well claim to legislate about the Sacrament of Penance as about the Sacrament of Matrimony. It is idle to reply that the State in many lands calling themselves Christian does arrogate such power to itself. I know that full well. But a usurpation does not establish a right ; it perpetuates a wrong. Nor, if the whole truth be known, does the State gain by this usurpation. Rather it loses far more than might appear on the surface of things. For the family is the germ cell of the nation, and on the healthy or unhealthy state of the cells depends the weal or woe of the organism. Marriage is a fundamental, elementary institution lying at the very basis of society, and determining its condition of morality and domestic happiness. Is it not a supreme advantage, then, that so important a social factor should be under the august sanction of religion, and that it should be withdrawn from the power of the civil courts, to be placed in the keeping of the only custodian capable of guarding it from decay and dissolution ? On it turns the whole question of sexual morality, which, again, depends entirely upon a man's outlook on life and human destiny. How can the State speak with convincing authority on such intimate, personal problems ? What can it do to purify men's hearts or regulate those interior thoughts that, in this matter above all, do in the end determine conduct despite exterior laws ?

But I am not now concerned with proving the reasonableness of the Church's claims. I am content to state them for her children, that they may know where they stand when these questions arise. Let others inveigh, if they will, against the arrogance of these pretensions, let them invoke the sacred name of liberty to cover anarchy, let them open the flood-gates till the tide swamps their homes and quenches the light of chastity, fidelity and pure affection at their hearths. The Church knows where all this leads, and raises her warning voice. But if the

world will not listen she waits, with her accustomed patience, till time and the logic of events show men the results of their folly. These results are manifesting themselves in a progressive decline of morals, which is causing alarm even among those who have long turned a deaf ear to the teaching of Rome. Serious sociologists in England, America, France and Germany are asking themselves what must ensue if the rake's progress of the last century continues. They are not thinking of human souls, and sin as such makes little appeal to their imagination. But, after all, a check must be set somewhere to the levity with which men and women contract unions and break them ; to the unnatural attempts made to frustrate the very purpose of Nature in the institution itself ; to the widespread havoc of human life and human happiness wrought by the doctrines of naturalism on these most delicate but most weighty questions.

Thus, in the United States Year Book for 1925, there is an article by Professor John M. Gillette, of Dakota University, in which he dwells upon the steady and extraordinary increase in the ratio of divorces to marriages. In 1889 only one marriage in 19 ended in divorce ; in 1895, one in 15 ; in 1900, one in 12 ; in 1916, one in 9 ; in 1922, one in 7. Hence he concluded that in 1925 the proportion would be one in little over six marriages. By the year 1922 the number of divorces in the United States had reached the enormous number of 148,554. In some counties of U.S.A. the number of divorces exceeds the number of marriages. In England and Wales, again, the number increased almost fivefold between 1913 and 1924. These facts are very sad to contemplate. Behind such figures lurks a mass of human misery and moral infamy which no lover of his kind can contemplate without pain. And for my part I believe that experience, a stern taskmaster, may yet do what neither the voice of God nor the warnings of the Church could accomplish. It may bring home to the peoples of

the world a realisation that if they put divorce upon their statute books at all they are opening a door to all manner of abuses. It was announced in the papers recently that a certain woman of Kansas was awaiting trial for the murder of her seventh husband. Two of the previous ones had also been murdered; the rest divorced. Henry VIII. has been styled a royal Bluebeard. But what name are we to find for the lady who has eclipsed his edifying record? Not so long ago we read of a princess in Paris seeking a divorce from her fifth husband. She has nearly rivalled the achievement of the Samaritan woman who spoke to Jesus by the Well of Sichar. It may be urged that these are exceptional cases. Perhaps so; but in U.S.A. nearly 150,000 divorces were pronounced during 1922, and in France nearly 33,000 during the same year. These figures need no commentary.

Are the women of the world going to sit silent and inactive in front of this menace to the home and to the stable union of the sexes? If so, they are more foolish than I take them to be. For, though men may and do suffer in consequence of the licence that inevitably follows from divorce, it is the women most of all who must pay the price in shame, in loneliness, and in tears. Surely long experience must have taught them that they need protection against the egotism and instability of man. In marriage they make a great surrender. They confide their youth, their beauty, their bodies—nay, their very souls—to some man's keeping. For them all is at stake on this throw of the dice. And to risk so much without some firm assurance of stable union would be the height of folly. Where the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage are denied, the status of women falls surely and swiftly.

Even already, we are told, Russian women are in revolt against the recent legislation of the Kommissars, which makes voluntary cohabitation, terminable at the will of either party, legal wedlock. We can well believe it; and, therefore, can feel some assurance that Christian marriage

will not quite disappear throughout the Soviet Republic at the fiat of a handful of fanatics, who have turned a revolution that had much to justify it in many departments of life, into a volcanic eruption covering a whole civilisation with a red, devastating lava-tide.

But let us be just to these wild anarchs of the modern world, now under the anathema of the West. They are really only carrying to a pitiless but logical conclusion the principles of thought which they have learned from Western masters. For many generations now, men, living under the secure shelter of institutions rooted at least in our Christian past, have been piling up moral dynamite under the foundations of society. Russia through various accidental causes has been the scene of the great explosion, which will not be the last unless the moral dynamite is removed. Let us hear the kind of teaching which I call moral dynamite. George Meredith, in his novel *Beauchamp's Career*, introduces an agnostic speaking thus : “ Alas for us !—this our awful baggage in the rear of humanity, these women who have not moved on their own feet one step since the primal mother taught them to suckle, are perpetually pulling us backward in the march. Slaves of form, shows and superstitious, they are slaves of the priests. They are so in gratitude, perchance, as the matter works out. For at one period the priests did cherish and protect the weak from animal man. But we have entered a broader daylight now, when the sun of high heaven has crowned our structure with the flower of brain, like him to scatter mists and penetrate darkness, and shoot from end to end of the earth ; and must we still be grinning subserviently to ancient usages and stale forms, because of a baggage that it is, woe to us ! too true we cannot cut loose from ? ” All this was apropos of Beauchamp's marriage before the parson, for which the lady stood out. When his child was born, we read : “ The youngster would insist on his right to be sprinkled by the parson, to get a legal name and please his mother. At all turns in

the history of our healthy relations with women we are confronted by the parson."

It is difficult to believe that the ladies of the world are so enamoured of the wisdom of this great age, "crowned with the flower of brain," which has given us Armageddon in the international sphere, smouldering civil war within most lands, and still more menacing class war in the economic arena, that they are willing to put their honour, their dignity, their homes at its mercy. Catholic women are bound by their faith to refuse; but it is well they should understand how much they gain by that refusal. And I affirm that, if they did not make it, either they or their daughters would soon be crying out from the depths of despair for the return of the priest to bless their marriages and baptise their babes.

After all no woman feels, when she gazes on the young life in her arms, that it is nothing more than so many pounds of animated clay. I read some time ago in a mediæval legend: "Every woman once has nursed the Holy Babe." What wisdom in those words! Every babe is holy in a woman's eyes, because she knows what each one has cost some daughter of Eve. And if it is holy, the mother will want someone to sprinkle it with water, and give it a name, and proclaim to all the world that it is not only her child but also the child of God; which is just what the Church does in a still higher sense than reason could have guessed. For this child is now the heir to a supernatural destiny, the Vision of God. That sublime dogma is a stone of offence to naturalism, but a rampart of protection round the Christian home. Life is, or ought to be, sacred in every rightly constituted person's eyes, whatever creed he holds. How much more so when it is known to be something destined to endure for ever, and called to that reward, transcending the imagination of man, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. Surely it was fitting that a sacrament should inaugurate and bless a union upon which such everlasting issues turn!

Another consequence of the sacramental nature of Christian marriage is its complete and absolute indissolubility. And this aspect of the question now calls for clear enunciation, because many errors prevail about it, some thinking that the indissolubility is derived wholly from the sacramental character of the contract, others that this character does not affect the firmness of the bond at all. Both views are erroneous. I have said already that the contract, even the natural contract as it existed before Christ, and exists to-day outside the ranks of the baptised, is indissoluble by any human authority. The contracting parties have no power to untie the knot or break the bond ; neither has the State, however much it may pretend to do so. But God has power where man has none, and the Church believes that God has granted a privilege in favour of the faith, known as the Pauline Privilege, in the case of converts from paganism. The words in which it is proclaimed by the Apostle are found in 1 Cor. vii. 12-15 : “ If any brother have a wife that believeth not, and she consent to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And if any woman hath a husband that believeth not, and he consent to live with her, let her not put away her husband. . . . But if the unbeliever depart, let him depart. For a brother or sister is not under servitude in such cases. But God hath called us in peace.” It is supposed that the marriage contracted in infidelity was legitimate and consummated. And yet even this consummated marriage can be dissolved, or, as the Apostle puts it, the servitude to the other party can be broken, if after the conversion of one spouse, the other, remaining in infidelity, refuses to continue to live with the Christian partner. Yet not every kind of cohabitation suffices. It must be pacific and without blasphemy of the Creator, which is interpreted to mean either (1) an attempt to wean the Christian from the faith, or (2) to lead the convert into sinful practices, especially against conjugal chastity, or (3) a refusal to give up concubinage, or (4) a refusal to let the children be brought up

as Christians. Further, there are a few other instances where the Church claims the same power of dissolving even a consummated marriage of pagans when one party is converted, which, according to many authors, fall under the Pauline Privilege, or, according to more, constitute an extension of it in favour of the faith.

But all these instances are relatively rare, almost confined to missionary lands, and the Church bases her claim on a Divine dispensation promulgated by St. Paul. When, however, we come to the Sacrament of Matrimony we find an indissolubility so complete that the Church admits her utter inability to break the bond. Yet we must first make a distinction before we can fully understand the teaching of theology on the point.

Marriage is a contract, and when that is duly entered into, with all the formalities and conditions requisite for its validity, the bond exists. The marriage is, as theologians say, ratified. But as yet there is only given the mutual right over one another's body. The right is not yet exercised, the marriage is not yet consummated, they have not yet become one flesh. And, though consummation does not constitute either the sacrament or the bond, it obviously completes or seals the union. Such a marriage is now both ratified and consummated; and it is this alone that is entirely and utterly indissoluble. Where a marriage is ratified only but not consummated, both parties retain the power of entering a religious Order with solemn vows, even against the will of the other party.<sup>1</sup> It is a privilege against the unconsummated contract, in favour of the higher state of perfection, somewhat analogous to the privilege against pagan marriage, even when consummated, in favour of the faith. The call of God to a holier state is held to override the claims of the other party to the fulfilment of the contract. Further, if difficulties occur after the marriage

<sup>1</sup> To do so *licitly*, where the other party refuses consent, requires a Papal dispensation, which will be most difficult to obtain.

ceremony and before consummation—if one party abandons the other, or defers unduly to take up life in common, or if other adequate reasons arise—the Church can dissolve the bond and leave both free to marry again.

But where marriage is both ratified and consummated no power, not even that of the Church, can touch the bond. Christian marriage, thus existing in its completeness, is entirely indissoluble save by death—"till death do us part." I need hardly add that this teaching runs counter to the main current of non-Catholic teaching and practice. But the Church is not dismayed by the formidable array of her adversaries. She says, as Pilate said to the Jewish priests : "Quod scripsi, scripsi." What she has written she has written. She has taken up ground on point from which, though the world should foam in anger, there is no retreat. On what, then, does she base her conclusion ? On Scripture and Tradition ; and on this question the Scriptures are not really ambiguous, in spite of all that has been said to the contrary. Let us hear their voice ; but let us seek out their entire teaching ; not what may be wrung from one isolated text, but what can—nay, must—be gathered from a comparison of all the texts. Here they are in full, and I prefer to give them as they stand in the Revised Version of the Church of England, lest the Douay Testament might be supposed to strain the sense in favour of Catholic doctrine :—

1. For the woman that hath a husband is bound by the law to the husband while she liveth ; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then, if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress : but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man (Ep. to the Romans, vii. 2, 3).

2. But unto the married I give charge, *yea*, not I, but the Lord, that the wife depart not from her husband : (but, and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband) ; and that the husband leave not his wife. . . . A

wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth ; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will ; only in the Lord (1 Cor. vii. 10, 11, 39).

3. Wives, *be in subjection unto your own husbands as unto the Lord.* For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the Head of the Church, *being Himself the Saviour of the body.* But as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it ; that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself : for no man ever hateth his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the Church ; because we are members of His body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife ; and the twain shall become one flesh. This mystery is great : but I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church (Ephes. v. 22-32).

4. Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery : and he that marrieth one that is put away from a husband committeth adultery (Luke xvi. 18).

5. And there came to him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife ; tempting him. And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you ? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of the creation, male and female made He them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife ; and the twain shall become one flesh : so that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house the disciples asked Him again of this matter. And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her : and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery (Mark x. 2-12).

6. It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery (Matt. v. 31-32).

7. And there came unto Him Pharisees, tempting Him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh? So that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto Him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery. The disciples say unto Him, If the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry. But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs which were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it (Matt. xix. 3-12).

The first five citations are surely clear in their general import, and perfectly consistent with one another. Marriage is a very solemn and even sacred contract. According to St. Paul it resembles the mystic union between Christ and His spouse, the Church, indissoluble for ever. It is the conjunction of one man with one woman, who thus become one flesh. From the beginning it was so. And if Moses permitted divorce it was on account of the hardness of Jewish hearts, to prevent worse crimes, just as some states legalise prostitution as the lesser of two evils. But Christ, as the Messias, abrogates this concession, and re-

calls men to the primitive purity of God's law. Hence St. Paul says that the Lord, through him, bids the married : " That the wife depart not from her husband ; but and if she depart let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband ; and that the husband leave not his wife." In none of these contexts is there the slightest hint of any possible exception. Nor is it a mere argument from silence. The context in Mark demands the complete indissolubility of marriage. We shall see this more fully in considering the parallel passage in Matthew. The whole tenor of St. Paul negatives the idea of divorce. Separation is possible, but both must remain unmarried or return to former relations with one another. It is hard to imagine that in such a context he would have ignored the most obvious of all causes of separation, conjugal infidelity, if it entitled either party to the liberty he accords to widows and the unmarried. Luke's terse and limpidly clear words are simply not true if there be any man who can put away his wife and marry another woman without committing adultery.

We now come to quotations 6 and 7. The Anglican Church, according to Dr. Gregg, Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, finds them coercive of the admission that Our Lord regarded adultery as justifying complete divorce. Let us take them separately. Matt. v. 32 runs in the original : "But I say to you that everyone who puts away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, makes her commit adultery, and whosoever marries a put-away woman commits adultery." The Revised Version seems less true to the Greek when it says " shall marry her when put away," which would rather suppose *τὴν* (or *αὐτὴν*) *ἀπολελυμένην*. Two questions arise : (1) Could the words bear the interpretation which the Anglican Church finds coercive ; (2) must they bear it ? I think they could, but still more decidedly that they need not, and that the traditional Catholic interpretation is more natural. The sense according to this is : a man who repudiates his wife with-

out the supreme excuse of infidelity becomes responsible for her sin of adultery if she cohabits with another. The sin is entirely her own if she has violated her vows to him. But the man who marries any repudiated woman is guilty of adultery. Hence so far from asserting the rupture of the bond the passage implies, in this interpretation, its continuance. Otherwise a man marrying a woman repudiated for adultery would not be guilty of adultery. Adversaries contend that the exceptive clause is to be understood in the second part of the verse. But this is by no means certain. Nay, the perfectly general form of the expression seems against it. And, assuredly, we are not “coerced” into supplying it. One might well expect that it would be repeated, if it applied to the second part. *And unless it does apply to the second part the verse is decisive against complete divorce.*<sup>1</sup> It was thus that the Fathers in general understood St. Matthew; for they taught that adultery was the only ground for lifelong repudiation *a mensa et thoro*, but that it did not confer right of remarriage on either party. Indeed, it could hardly confer such a right on one without conferring it on the other. And thus Christ would have taught a doctrine crowning adultery with the reward of liberty. The traditional interpretation (1) harmonises this text with all the previous ones, and (2) prevents Our Lord’s words from being a very weak and imperfect reform of the Mosaic concessions. A number of other explanations have been suggested; but it is impossible to enter into them here. The weakest of them would be more satisfactory than one which sets St. Matthew at variance with St. Paul, St. Mark and St. Luke.

<sup>1</sup> Mr Gladstone once illustrated the reasonableness of this interpretation, both here and in Matt. xix. 9, by a comparison. “Suppose,” he wrote, “we found this precept: ‘Whosoever shall flog his son, except it be for disobedience, and put him to death, shall be punished by law,’ what should he think of the interpreter who founded upon this sentence the position that a father might, for disobedience, flog his son to death?”

But there remains Matt. xix. 9. It must be admitted that if this verse is considered by itself alone, without reference to the other texts of the New Testament, or to its own context, the more obvious interpretation is that which makes adultery a ground even for complete divorce. But surely no words of Scripture can be safely interpreted without reference to the rest or, above all, without reference to their own context. Now that the exceptive clause in Matt. xix. 9, if understood as severing the marriage, is inconsistent with texts 1-5 above is plain. It is also inconsistent with the more probable sense of Matt. v. 32; and, what is more important, it is utterly out of harmony with the setting in which it is found. This is so significant that we must dwell upon it at some length.

In the time of Our Lord the question of divorce divided the Rabbinical schools. The school of Shammai held that the words in Deut. xxiv. 1, "some unseemly thing," should be restricted to a sin against chastity; and Hillel's disciples, in truly latitudinarian fashion, claimed that any reason at all sufficed. The Pharisees thought they saw in this a chance of impaling Our Lord upon the horns of a dilemma. Either he would embrace the lax view of Hillel and destroy his prestige as a teacher of righteousness, or he would endorse the views of Shammai, and thus arouse the prejudices of the lax, including so dangerous a libertine as Herod, who had murdered John the Baptist for upholding the sanctity of marriage. We have now the *mise-en-scène*. The Pharisees put their question in the very terms of Hillel: "May a man dismiss his wife for any reason at all (*καὶ πᾶσας αἰτίας*, i.e. for any and every reason)?" Our Lord immediately lifts the whole controversy to a higher plane. He leads them back to the institution of marriage in the Garden of Eden: "Have ye not read that He which made *them* from the beginning made them male and female and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become

one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together let not man put asunder.’’ Surely all this is unequivocal, categorical and universal. It is bewildering to find Dr. Gregg narrowing down the words “Let not man put asunder” to an exhortation against infidelity. And still more astonishing to hear that “the act of infidelity itself effects the dissolution of the marriage bond, while the State only registers externally the spiritual breach which the adulterer has effected by his act.” It certainly would be an easy way of getting rid of onerous contracts if one party could rescind them by violating his obligations. A defaulting debtor would thus escape the obligation of paying by simple non-payment. An oath-bound soldier would evade the duty of loyalty by a single act of treason. That Our Lord taught any analogous doctrine in respect of marriage is just unthinkable.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This strange contention has since been defended by Archdeacon Charles in three sermons preached in Westminster Abbey and reported in *The Times*, 11th, 18th, 25th July 1927. He maintains, among other surprising things, that: “From whatever standpoint they compared the narratives in Matthew and Mark the trustworthiness of the Matthew narrative manifested itself as unassailable, alike from the standpoint of the other books of the New Testament and from all the contemporary history of the time. It was from a critical examination of New Testament authorities that he concluded that divorce was recognised by our Lord and His Apostles as legitimate under certain conditions, though divorce, even under such conditions, was to be regarded as the last resort of the guiltless husband or of the guiltless wife” (*The Times*, 18th July 1927).

The reader has already seen *all* the texts in the New Testament bearing on the subject, and will later in this chapter see the views of many celebrated non-Catholic critics relative to them. He has thus ample data for judging of the justness of the Anglican Archdeacon’s conclusions. The *Church Times*, 18th July, takes him severely to task: “His position is simply deplorable. For the loyal Churchman marriage is indissoluble, and the law clearly laid down alike in Scripture and in the Canons of the Church holds.” It is not for me to interpret Anglican Canons; but in the Catholic Church the law holds, and will hold in spite of such controversial courtesies as the following: “Rome was the victim of its own lack of critical insight, its own lack of sound judgment, its own spiritual shortsightedness, its own soul-destroying casuistries and sophistries from one age to another” (*The Times*,

But the Pharisees were not content. They urged the difficulty arising out of the bill of divorce permitted by Moses. It would suit their purpose equally well if they could manœuvre Jesus into a condemnation of the great Jewish lawgiver. But, as so often happened, He not only eluded the toils, but even turned the tables upon them : “ Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives : but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.” We have here the three words which alone cause real embarrassment. Let us first observe how much the lofty teaching of Our Lord is lowered and reduced almost to bathos, if the most flagrant and frequent ground of a bill of divorce is left unannulled. In the beginning there was no divorce, and the Messias, proclaiming the doctrines of a New Law, higher at every point than the teaching of any previous dispensation, revoking the concession of Moses to Jewish hardness of heart, shrinks from recurring to the pristine severity of Genesis ! This surely needs cogent proof. Does it get such from the context ? Let us see :—

The disciples say unto Him : If the case of a man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry. But He said unto them :

25th July 1927). It may be through “lack of critical insight” or “spiritual shortsightedness,” but Catholics will, I fear, fail to find in the Archdeacon’s words, or elsewhere, any *proof* of this further statement : “The dogma that marriage was indissoluble is a human fiction founded on an unhistorical basis. When that was linked up with the numerous fantastic impediments which the mediæval Church devised to a valid marriage, it gave birth to the extraordinary dogma of nullity, which was the peculiar property of the Roman Church, and which in the hands of the Roman Curia had been the source of intolerable moral scandals during the last 1400 years” (*The Times*, 18th July 1927). Of more intolerable moral scandals than the modern divorce courts ? It is hard to credit that this was seriously asserted ; and in Westminster Abbey of all places. What would the builders of the Abbey have thought of these sermons ?

All men cannot receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs which were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs which made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

I wonder have these remarkable verses been duly pondered by those Christians who feel reluctantly constrained by Matthew's words to admit that Jesus here fell below the austere morality of St. Paul. If we compare them with 1 Cor. vii., we find a wonderful harmony. St. Paul, too, praises those who, like himself, practise life-long celibacy, or, in our Lord's metaphor, make themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, but recognises that all cannot take this counsel. Are we to suppose that Christ in proposing the same ideal leaves a door wide open to the moral evils attendant upon complete divorce for whatsoever reason it be?

Certainly the disciples did not so understand His words, and they were in a better position than we are for fully comprehending the Master's meaning. Otherwise, their astonishment would be inexplicable. That Christ should have merely approved the teaching of Shammai could not possibly have astonished them—it is not now a question of the Pharisees. He must have gone farther, very much farther, before men who had listened to the Sermon on the Mount could take alarm, and conclude that marriage under such circumstances was inexpedient.

Surely, then, we must conclude that the exceptive clause in xix. 9 does not mean, and cannot mean, the rupture of the marriage bond. If it does, then St. Matthew has told the whole incident in an extraordinary manner.

But what does it mean? No one will deny the exegetical difficulty. Numerous explanations have been proposed from time to time. Some have suspected interpolation, and this finds favour with not a few modern non-Catholic exegetes. There are many variant readings

in the MSS., both here and in Matt. v. 32. But nearly all the MSS. have the exceptive clause in some form or other in xix. 9, and all have it in v. 32. Hence, Catholic commentators at least have shrunk from eliminating it. Dr. MacRory, in a very interesting article in the *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 1911 (vol. vi. p. 86, sqq.), suspects corruption in xix. 9. He bases his contention on the Vatican MS., "the best and oldest we possess," which has a reading here almost identical with v. 32. This is supported by an uncial of the sixth century (C\*), by a sixth-century MS. of the old Latin (N), and by the Memphitic or oldest Coptic version, which is held to date from the second century. He enforces his contention by a reference to the earliest Fathers, and suggests that the text may have been tampered with in the fifty MSS. prepared by Eusebius for Constantine in A.D. 331. The purpose would have been to bring Church teaching more into accord with the Roman civil code, which permitted divorce. It is an attractive hypothesis. But Catholic commentators generally have abided by the received text, and offered various interpretations of the verse which will bring it into harmony with the others already cited, and with its own context. At least seven such have been proposed. The most probable is that which understands the verse as v. 32 has been explained above, namely, as permitting permanent separation from bed and board in the case of adultery but the rupture of the bond in no case at all. Only in some such way can we prevent a single clause from contradicting a whole series of texts, and stultifying the words in which it lies embedded.

Nor is it only Catholic commentators who deny that Christ made any exception to the indissolubility of the bond in the case of adultery. Many others, from widely divergent standpoints, question this conclusion. Thus, Plummer<sup>1</sup> writes :—

<sup>1</sup> *Gospel acc. to St. Matt.* (Elliot, Stock, 1909), pp. 81, 82.

There is grave reason for doubting whether Christ, either in the Sermon or elsewhere, ever taught that divorce is allowable when the wife has committed adultery. . . . It is very improbable that Christ did teach this. If we want his true teaching we must go to Mark and Luke, according to whom He declared the indissolubility of the marriage bond.

He assumes, indeed, that the First Evangelist did assert it, but adds :—

Yet, even on the Evangelist's authority, we can hardly believe that Our Lord, after setting aside the Mosaic enactment as an accommodation to low morality, should Himself have sanctioned what it allowed.

W. C. Allen<sup>1</sup> agrees :—

It is, however, open to question whether this exception (in v. 32) is not an addition of the editor, representing, no doubt, two influences, viz. Jewish custom and tradition and the exigencies of ethical necessity in the early Christian Church. A similar exception is made in xix. 9, and it will be there seen that the clause is clearly an interpolation. Moreover, the teaching of Christ as recorded by Mark (x. 11) seems to preclude any such exception, and St. Luke represents this teaching as a simple prohibition of divorce without reservation (xvi. 18). The same may be said of St. Paul's account of Christ's teaching (1 Cor. vii. 10, 11).

C. W. Votaw<sup>2</sup> tells us :—

In Matt. v. 32, xix. 19 there is a striking addition to the words of Jesus as recorded in Mark x. 11; Luke xvi. 18; cf. 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11. . . .

But this Matthaeian addition falls under suspicion for four reasons. [These have been sufficiently indicated already.] Consequently, the opinion is becoming strongly supported that these words of the Matthew passages are a mollifying interpretation put upon Jesus' teaching by a generation or a group of Christians who took his words as a new marriage legislation, and regarded the statute as intolerably severe (so Bleek, de Wette,

<sup>1</sup> 'St. Matthew' (I.C.C., Edinburgh), 1907, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings' *Dict. of the Bible*, Extra Vol., p. 27, footnote.

Schneckenburger, Bruce, Heinrici, H. Weiss, H. Holtzmann, Wendt, Schmiedel, Bacon). In this case Mark and Luke unite in preserving Jesus' actual words, which laid down a principle and not a statute. . . . Other scholars hold that the exceptive phrase in Matthew is an interpolation, but only states explicitly what was already implied as true in the nature of the case, that the act of adultery actually destroys the marriage union and so is the divorce, instead of merely being the ground of divorce (so Meyer, Tholuck, E. Haupt, B. Weiss). But adultery cannot be *in itself* a proper ground for divorce on Gospel principles.

Similarly C. W. Emmet<sup>1</sup> :—

Hence much is to be said for the view which is steadily gaining ground that the exception in Matthew is an editorial edition from the Judaic standpoint, or under the pressure of practical necessity, the absolute rule being found too hard.

Wendt's words are strong<sup>2</sup> :—

The exception noted by the first Evangelist is no real exception to the rule which Jesus so emphatically laid down, that the obligation of marriage is absolute, and no dissolution of it is possible without incurring the guilt of adultery.

In a footnote he adds :—

I wish only to say that the simple, unqualified statement, that to put away a wife on the ground of unchastity is not culpable adultery, does not correspond with the meaning of Jesus.

Weiss<sup>3</sup> is equally categorical :—

Certainly, the Evangelist (*i.e.* Matthew) did not think of a ground for divorce as we mean it, and still less did Jesus, who in every case assumes it as self-evident that before God there is no such thing as divorce, and who only brands remarriage as adultery in order that, in the case of entire putting away, the path of reconciliation, and so to accomplishment of the divine will, shall remain open.

<sup>1</sup> Hastings' *Dict. of the Bible*, s.v. 'Marriage,' p. 586.

<sup>2</sup> *The Teaching of Jesus*, Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 354.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Christ* (Eng. Tr., vol. ii., p. 151, footnote).

We need not endorse the suggestion of several of these critics that the author of our St. Matthew took the liberty of adding to the words of Christ. Père Lagrange<sup>1</sup> adopts a much more satisfactory view. He writes :—

Numerous critics, more or less independent (Holtz, Allen, Klost, M'Neile, Loisy very clearly), recognize that Jesus cannot have contradicted himself in this fashion. But they pretend (except M'Neile) that Matthew has introduced this exception in the interest of the Jewish Christians. Yet, apart from the improbability of a disciple taking such liberties with his Master, it is inadmissible to attribute this contradiction to Matthew in the very context where he reveals to us the thought of Jesus. Before supposing a contradiction . . . we should see if the version of Matthew do not admit of explanation by a simple awkwardness of style (*par une simple maladresse de style*).

A fault of style, involving an ambiguity, is sufficient to eliminate any contradiction between the utterances of Christ and any, surely inconceivable, design on the part of the Evangelist to introduce a cause of divorce where the Saviour had excluded it.

I have observed also in certain older Protestant commentators, who embrace the view that adultery justifies divorce, a certain hesitancy. Thus, Dr. Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln,<sup>2</sup> resumes the teaching of the Scriptures and the "ancient authorities" on divorce as follows :—

1. A man may not divorce his wife except for fornication.
2. If he divorces her for *this* cause, it is not *expedient* for him to marry again in the lifetime of the partner whom he has divorced ; some Latin fathers say it is not *lawful*.
3. Whosoever marrieth a woman that has been divorced committeth adultery.

Olshausen<sup>3</sup> has a remark not too flattering to the Reformation age :—

According to this, therefore, it is easy to see how the marriage

<sup>1</sup> *Evangile selon S. Matthieu* (Gabalda, 1923), p. 369.

<sup>2</sup> *Greek Testament* (Rivington, 1872), p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> *On the Gospels* (Eng. Tr., Clark, 1854), vol. iii. p. 94.

tie is held to be indissoluble in the Catholic Church. Not the less, however, had the Reformers a perfect right to act as they did in softening down its strictness, and refusing to carry out exactly the ideal view of marriage as applicable to the visible Church, many of the members of which were still living in the hardness of heart which distinguished Old Testament times.

The same hesitancy is revealed in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes* (London, 1912). A summary is there given of the views expressed by clergymen of various denominations. These are bewildering in their variety, and make it clear how impossible it is in the case of non-Catholic bodies to speak of accepted doctrine. But several important witnesses at least strengthen the contention of this article. Thus, Dr. Gore withdraws the opinion expressed in his edition of the *Sermon on the Mount* that the exception contained in chapters v. and xix. of St. Matthew's Gospel does not prohibit the remarriage of an innocent man who has put away his wife for adultery.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Chase, Bishop of Ely, considers that according to the three earliest witnesses—St. Mark, St. Luke's version of "Q" and St. Paul (the earliest of all)—Christ taught the absolute indissolubility of marriage, which is a strong argument for the conclusion that marriage cannot be dissolved for any reason, but that St. Matthew did represent Christ as allowing an exception.<sup>2</sup>

Rev. J. P. Whitney, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at King's College, London, considers that taking the conception of the Church throughout the greater part of its history Our Lord certainly laid down a general principle, which was absolutely binding on Christians without any modifications, and that He, with the utmost strictness, forbade a remarriage [after a divorce] of any kind.<sup>3</sup>

Rev. J. Cooper, D.D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Glasgow, states that, although

<sup>1</sup> *Report*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, etc., p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

the Church of Scotland recognises divorce for adultery and desertion, he considers it doubtful whether the clause "except for fornication" was ever spoken by Our Lord, and having regard to the uncertainty which is increasing among scholars on this point, he is of opinion that marriage should be treated as indissoluble.<sup>1</sup>

Rev. H. B. Swete, D.D., Regius Professor of Divinity, Cambridge, considers that in its original form, Our Lord's condemnation of remarriage after divorce was absolute, *i.e.* that He stated no exception. But he does not draw the inference that it is not lawful for the Church, or for a Christian State, to permit divorce or remarriage in any circumstances. Both, however, are strongly to be deprecated, because both are departures from the Christian conception of marriage; neither was contemplated by Our Lord; and, if they must be conceded, this should be clearly done only under grave necessity, and because of the *σκληροταρδία* [hardness of heart] which the new law of love has not yet dispelled.<sup>2</sup>

In view of all these opinions it is difficult to see how anyone is constrained against his higher aspirations to admit that Our Lord made Christian marriage dissoluble even when infidelity has taken place.

In conclusion, let me add that F. C. Cook, M.A., Canon of Exeter,<sup>3</sup> while maintaining the exceptive clause, yet informs us in a note: "The Church of England has never authoritatively sanctioned any other separation than that *a mensa et thoro*; and this with an express prohibition of remarriage (Canon 107)."

Dr. Gregg seems to think otherwise; but he is certainly in opposition to the *Church Times* which, in a leading article (20th February 1925) congratulating Mr. Cosgrave and Dail Eireann "on their restoration to Southern Ireland of the marriage law of Christian civilisation," wrote:—

<sup>1</sup> *Report*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Commentary on the Synoptics* (Murray, 1878), p. 102.

No member of the Church of England or Ireland has any right by canon law to a pretended dissolution of his or her marriage ; and the Church of Ireland owes a deep debt of gratitude to Mr. Cosgrave and his Government for removing from its members a temptation to sin.

Space does not permit me to develop the argument from tradition, which would call for a separate volume. It must suffice to say that the Fathers are strongly opposed to divorce *a vinculo* for any reason whatsoever ; that the Church has consistently striven to eliminate it from all civil codes ; that the rare and often obscure citations from the Fathers, local councils or individual bishops which have been adduced to weaken this argument either admit of another explanation or are far outweighed by the weight of evidence to the contrary ; and finally that, if we abstract from a very curious decision of Celestine III. (1191-1198) repudiated by his immediate successor Innocent III. (1198-1216), the See of Peter has defended the indissolubility of ratified and consummated marriage against the greatest pressure, oftentimes repeated, that the powers and principalities of this world could exert. It would be difficult to find another dogma more steadfastly maintained against such passionate opposition, which was able to cite in its favour an ambiguous text of Holy Writ, and was supported by the influence of the mightiest monarchs.

The entirely different question of nullity decrees, as in the Vanderbilt-Marlborough suit, will engage attention in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONDITIONS AND IMPEDIMENTS

Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven.—Matt. xvi. 18.

WE have deduced already from the fact that marriage is a sacrament the Church's right to settle the conditions and formalities of the contract, and to set up impediments, either prohibitive or invalidating. I shall now endeavour to explain, in outline at least, what she has done in this respect. A good deal of what I shall have to say must necessarily appear strange to anyone unversed in jurisprudence. Moreover, so much legislation might cause the impression that marriage is a very difficult affair. But no, it is quite easy—some say fatally easy. Or it might appear as if there must be a great number of invalid marriages on account of some hidden and unsuspected defect. But no, those who are married need not fear that there may have been something wanting to the full binding force of their union. The fear is groundless. All elaborate legislation—and the Church's code is certainly elaborate—has on the uninitiated the same effect. It appears to render the abnormal normal, and makes one wonder how he can possibly escape the numerous pitfalls. Again, some will ask what can be the need for so many enactments relative to this very simple business. Well, I can only say that the Church's legislation has grown out of nineteen centuries' experience, and on that ground alone should command our respect. But one would have to make a prolonged study of it fully to appreciate its wisdom. From first to last it aims at safeguarding the sacrament from pro-

fanation; at preventing hasty, undesirable, dangerous unions; at securing the highest good of all parties—of man and wife and offspring. Not without reason is the Church called Mother, for she watches over all her children with a solicitude truly maternal, and leads us, if we obey her, not only to the joys of Paradise, but to the highest attainable degree of happiness in this valley of exile. She cannot alter the fundamental facts of life, nor exorcise its inevitable sorrows. But in the truly Christian home she has given man the securest nest and shelter he has ever known against the storms of a loveless and a cruel world.

I suppose it is hardly necessary to dwell upon the formalities of the ceremony among Catholics. All are aware that, though the priest is not the minister, he is necessary. A marriage to be valid must be performed in the presence of the priest of the parish, or the Ordinary of the diocese, in which it takes place, or a priest delegated by either, and of two witnesses. The priest must be a free agent, not there under duress or compulsion, and he must ask the questions and receive the answers signifying the consent. The witnesses must be morally present—that is, near enough to bear witness to the contract. That is all that is essential in the ceremony itself.

The consent must be internal, fully deliberate, externally expressed, mutual, and, in general, absolute or unconditional. Not every condition would render the contract invalid. But a discussion of this question would be long and intricate. Neither is it very practical. For the Church rarely permits a conditional assent. Again, there must be no substantial error or mistake. For example. A cannot marry B if he or she is fully persuaded that the other party is really C. An accidental error, let us suppose the belief that the wife has a large dowry when she is penniless, may be unfortunate, but it does not render the contract null and void, unless it is made an essential stipulation. More might be said on this point, too, if space

permitted. I have already remarked that utter ignorance of the nature and meaning of the contract would invalidate it. The consent must also be free. But I prefer to treat this point under the head of impediments, altering slightly the disposition of the New Code.

An impediment is the absence in either party of some circumstance demanded by competent authority either for the validity or liceity of the contract.

Impediments are either prohibitive or invalidating. In a certain sense every requirement demanded under pain of sin—as, for example, the state of grace—might be called a prohibitive impediment. But the name is commonly reserved to three: Simple Vows, Legal Adoption, and Mixed Religion. The first occurs when a person has made a simple vow of celibacy or virginity, a vow to enter the religious state, or to receive Holy Orders, or a simple vow of chastity in Religion (where the Church does not annex to it the power of invalidating marriage, as it has done in one instance at least). A marriage contracted by a person with such a vow<sup>1</sup> is valid, but sinful or illicit, unless a dispensation has first been procured from competent authority.

Legal Adoption<sup>2</sup> constitutes a prohibitive impediment in those cases where the civil law so decides, for in this matter the Church follows the State law. The third impediment, that of "Mixed Religion,"<sup>3</sup> is well-known. It forbids mixed marriages, as they are called. These are marriages between parties of whom one is a Catholic and the other a baptised Christian pertaining to some non-Catholic sect. All are agreed that such marriages are highly undesirable. All Churches unite in deprecating them, though when Rome legislates to prevent them, or at least to render them less frequent, a cry of indignation goes up from the various non-Catholic communities at her

<sup>1</sup> New Code, Canon 1058.

<sup>2</sup> New Code, Canon 1059.

<sup>3</sup> New Code, Canons 1060-1064.

intolerance. The case against them is evident. When man and wife hold different faiths they are divided on the greatest issue in life, and this difference must lead to a different outlook upon many other important issues. It begets, only too easily, domestic discord or else religious indifference. It makes the proper education of the children in their religion more difficult, and acts disturbingly on their young convictions. Finally, such marriages do not as a rule turn out happy. It is vain to point to exceptional instances. The Church judges by the general tendency of things and their observed consequences. And she has statistics to demonstrate that tendency. Thus, in Würtemburg, Germany, in 1912, an investigation revealed the fact that out of 1460 mixed marriages 819 were celebrated before a Protestant clergyman, 225 were merely civil marriages, 416 according to the Catholic rite. Out of a total of 3683 sons of mixed marriages, 2131 were brought up Protestants, 388 were not baptised, 1164 were educated as Catholics. And these figures might be paralleled elsewhere. Mixed marriages are a notorious source of leakage. The Church, therefore, does her best to discourage them. Hence she has set up a prohibitive impediment forbidding them under pain of sin. A dispensation can, of course, be got. But it is reluctantly given, for grave reasons, and only under these conditions:—(1) that all danger to the faith of the Catholic party or the children be removed, as the Divine law itself demands; (2) that the non-Catholic party give a guarantee not to interfere with the faith of the other, and that both guarantee the Catholic upbringing of the children; (3) that there be a moral certainty of the future observance of these guarantees. As a general rule the guarantees are to be put down in writing. Further, the Catholic partner is under obligation to endeavour, with all prudence, to bring the other to the true faith; and, finally, there must be no renewal of the ceremony before a non-Catholic minister.

All this may seem severe. Yet the Church avows that

she dislikes the whole performance, and will only tolerate it when she has some hope of lessening the evils inherent in it. Moreover, she is legislating for her own children, and tells them they must act in a certain way unless they wish to disobey her. This impediment of itself does not render the marriage invalid. But, owing to what I have said above, there can only be very rare and exceptional cases where a valid marriage can be contracted without a dispensation. For, as we have seen, a marriage to be valid must be performed before the parish priest or Ordinary of the place, or their delegate. And no such priest will perform a mixed marriage without a dispensation. The moral of the story is not to let one's self fall in love outside one's own communion, especially as the civil law in most lands refuses to enforce the guarantees, however solemnly given.

We now come to what are known as diriment or invalidating impediments, which are more numerous and more important as rendering the marriage not merely illicit but null and void. In explaining them I will content myself with giving the present legislation, in force since the promulgation of the New Code of Canon Law, 19th May 1918. It differs in a few points from earlier discipline, but has gained in simplicity and clearness by the changes.

And first I shall take two impediments that aim at securing the fullest freedom in the matrimonial consent. Just because marriage is so solemn a contract, indissoluble save by death, it is obvious that both parties ought to be entirely free. One can hardly conceive a crueler injustice than to force anyone into such an intimate, lifelong partnership against his or her will. The Church has decided that it shall not be. Hence she has established an impediment called "Of Violence or Fear," which in the Code runs thus :—

I. **Violence or Fear (N.C. Canon 1087).**—"A marriage is invalid if entered into on account of violence or grave fear, inflicted unjustly and from without, to escape which

one is forced to elect marriage." This needs some commentary. The fear must come from without, not from within one's self, as, for example, when a girl fears that if she does not accept this proposal she may never get another, or fears she may otherwise be left in indigence, or is alarmed by the spiritual dangers now besetting her. The constraint must come from other persons, and the persons most particularly aimed at are those cruel and foolish parents who often harass a young boy or girl into an undesired union. Further, it must be grave or serious constraint, which really lessens, if it does not destroy, the freedom of the choice. Thus it is not enough that parents express a wish or a preference. They must use threats or grave pressure. Again, such constraint must be unjust. If it were just it would not invalidate the marriage. Let us suppose that a man has led a girl astray under promise of marriage, and that the father of the girl threatens him with legal proceedings or a good flogging unless he fulfils his promise, such a wholesome fear would not render the marriage void. Finally, it must be such that, in the words of the Code, the victim "is forced to elect marriage."<sup>1</sup> Physical violence is not necessary; pressure of any kind, which under the circumstances is clearly grave and unjust, suffices. Parents, particularly, can often exercise such without having recourse to anything so crude as a horse-whip. But if they do, they can bring about the outward ceremony and no more. However, even in such a case the invalidity can be set right if later the constrained spouse,

<sup>1</sup> It is certain under the New Code that the unjust treatment need not be meant to bring about marriage *with a determined person*. It suffices that it should aim at forcing matrimony on the victim. Nay, probability cannot be denied to the opinion which holds that unjust fear or persecution may cause the impediment, whatever be the persecutor's motive, *if marriage is in point of fact the only way of escape*. So Vermeersch: *Theol. Mor.* v. 3, n. 789, p. 637; Cappello: *De Sacramentis* v. III. n. 606, 4° p. 647; De Smet: *De Sponsalibus et Matrimonio* Ed. 4<sup>a</sup> (1927) n. 538 p. 472, who cites Adloff, Chelodi, Leitner and Kiselstein in the same sense.

recognising the invalidity of the marriage, freely consents to it. But he or she must know that freedom still is left, and now freely choose to continue in the union.

If we apply this to the famous Vanderbilt-Marlborough case, in the light of the facts as revealed by the official document,<sup>1</sup> we see how wanton was the campaign of calumny which the press of two hemispheres conducted—until the truth was published. Then, it will have been observed, there was a complete, shamefaced silence everywhere. A clearer instance of compulsion to marry could not well be imagined. Every artifice, short of physical violence, was brought to bear upon a girl of seventeen to quit the man she loved, and to whom she was engaged, in order to marry one whom she scarcely knew at all, from whom she fled in tears when he claimed her hand; a girl who had to be watched even on the morning of her marriage by agents of the mother; who, on the testimony of the bridegroom, arrived late for the ceremony and seemed troubled; whose replies, it was noted by the press of the time, were scarcely audible. These facts were sworn to by the Duke of Marlborough, the petitioner herself, her mother, two aunts and other witnesses. Twenty days after the ceremony she told her so-called husband that she had been forced into the marriage. After ten years of a married life, never happy, they agreed to separate; fifteen years later they were divorced with mutual consent. The invalidity of that marriage ceremony at the start is clear almost to any thinking person. For it would seem as if there was no internal consent at all, but mere external compliance. And the defect could not well be remedied, for the unhappy bride, knowing nothing of the invalidity of the contract, was never in a position to give the free consent requisite for its revalidation. Further, it is certain she would never have given it; for she never came to love the partner, who had won her mother, rather than herself,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Acta Sanctæ Sedis* 1926. It is reproduced in full with an English translation in *The Tablet*, Dec. 18, 1927, p. 848 sqq.

by a ducal coronet and an ancient name. The evidence, too, was so complete and conclusive that I doubt if the canonists in Southwark or Rome who tried the case can have needed half-an-hour to make up their minds.

And those weak-kneed Catholics must now feel ashamed of themselves, who were influenced by the *ex parte* statements of a notoriously biased press. The amount of nonsense that was written and spoken about this *cause célèbre* was phenomenal. First the Church was reproached with insolence in interfering in a non-Catholic marriage. But she did not interfere. A Protestant lady thought she had reasons for wishing to know what Catholic canon law would say to such a marriage. And she got the only answer possible. Again, it was hinted that she only obtained the decision because she was the daughter of a multi-millionaire. But if the beggar-maid who married the king, Cophetua, had brought equal evidence of constraint before a Roman tribunal she would have got the same decision, even if the king had been in a position to threaten schism like Henry VIII. Again, some papers insisted on the fact that two American bishops had assisted at the ceremony, and the action of Rome was construed as a slur upon the Episcopalian Protestant Church of the United States. Now, Rome does, indeed, reject the claim of these gentlemen to be regarded as successors of the Apostles. But an entirely similar marriage might have taken place in the presence of the whole College of Cardinals, and it would have made no manner of difference to the question at issue. Finally, it was asked: How does annulment differ from divorce, or what is the good of rejecting the latter if the same result can be attained by a declaration of nullity? It is difficult to answer this question; for minds capable of putting it are incapable of understanding any answer. Is it the same thing to declare a bank-note a forgery and to tear up a genuine one? Or, after scientific tests, to declare a supposed diamond paste, and, on the other hand, to take a real diamond and crush it

to powder under a steam-hammer? Yet I have seen this objection urged by eminent non-Catholic authorities. Rome is supposed to attain by the wily, jesuitical means of annulment what other honester communities accomplish by divorce. They forget that in the civil courts, where divorce is allowed, there are also nullity cases. Thus in England and Wales in 1925 there were 42 annulments—more than the yearly average of the Roman courts for the Catholic world—and in addition 2563 divorces. While in the U.S.A., as we saw, there were nearly 150,000 divorces in 1922, as compared with an average of about 30 annulments in Rome.<sup>1</sup> What a contrast! The faithful should learn to keep their heads when those periodical

<sup>1</sup> The *Acta Sanctæ Sedis* publishes every year an account of the cases decided by the Rota during the previous year. I have examined the decisions for the years 1915–1924. From 1915 to 1919 the number was very small and the final results not always clearly indicated. From 1920 to 1924 the summaries are very perfect and the results as follows:—

Year.	Cases Decided,	Decrees of Nullity Granted,	Decrees Refused.	Marriage Declared Valid but Unconsum- mated and Dispensable.
1920	24	16	5	3
1921	26	17	8	1
1922	33	22	11	—
1923	31	17	12	2
1924	42	27	14	1

Compare these figures with similar statistics for England and Wales alone, where, besides thousands of divorces annually, nullity decrees granted in the years 1918–1925 amounted to 29, 25, 49, 64, 79, 81, 37, 42.

It is true that not all nullity decrees in the Catholic Church come before the Rota. The Defender of the Bond is bound to appeal from a decision of the Episcopal Court in favour of nullity to the Metropolitan Court. But if this also sustains the nullity he is not obliged to appeal to Rome. He is, however, free, and would be conscientiously bound to do so, if he had the slightest doubt as to the justness of the decision (*cf.* Cappello: *De Sacramentis*, Vol. III. c. xv. Art. iii. n. 887, p. 929; Turin, 1923). Hence it will be seen that the number of decrees granted without appeal to Rome must be too small to lessen substantially the contrast drawn.

storms of criticism burst in fury about the Rock of Peter. Let them but wait a little while, and they will see the waves subside as quickly as they rose, and the Rock still standing, with nothing but the wet spray running down its face. It argues weak faith and little loyalty when a Catholic permits himself to be half persuaded that the Church has abandoned a fundamental tenet of its doctrine, or will do for the daughter of an American plutocrat what it refused to do for some of the mightiest monarchs in history, namely, touch the bond of consummated Christian matrimony where it really exists.<sup>1</sup>

II. Abduction (N.C. Canon 1074).—Another impediment meant to safeguard the freedom of consent is called the impediment of abduction, and is thus defined: “Between a man who has carried off a woman for the purpose of marriage and this woman no valid marriage can take place as long as she remains in the power of the abductor.” This evidently aims at protecting the weaker sex. Men are presumed free from the danger of abduction or strong-minded enough to hold out against it. Hence, if a man were carried off, let us suppose, by the agents of a queen, and kept in detention till he consented to marry her, and if he, while in detention, did really come to desire the marriage, he could contract it. But an abducted woman in similar circumstances must be first set at liberty. Then, if she wishes, she can fly back to the arms of her too tempestuous lover. The object is obviously to make

<sup>1</sup> In conclusion I may cite the testimony of a competent non-Catholic critic: “In the Marlborough-Vanderbilt decree the ground of nullity, lack of consent, or rather consent forced by *metus reverentialis*, is recognized in all systems of jurisprudence. The Papal Court, like other Supreme Courts, has its own procedure, rules of evidence, and standard of proof. I have read the reports of many of these nullity trials in *Acta S. Sedis* and *Analecta Juris Pontificii*, and, considering them as a Protestant and a barrister with some experience of the divorce court, the decisions appeared to me fair and justified by the evidence—according to Roman Catholic Law” (William Nevill M. Geary, writing to *The Times*, 19th November 1926).

perfectly sure that she is not acting under duress—a fair and wise provision surely, more needed doubtless in older days than at present, yet perhaps not wholly uncalled for in some parts of the globe to-day. The Church does not stand for marriage by capture anywhere or at any time. Abduction must not be confounded with elopement, which, however foolish it may be and usually is, does not constitute an impediment.

III. Age (N.C. Canon 1067).—According to the natural law the growing boy or girl becomes capable of entering this contract as soon as their mental development is such that they can understand the nature of the contract and give a matrimonial consent. Hence the marriages between children, such as occur in India, are not necessarily invalid for the mere reason that the couple have not reached adolescence. They often, on examination, will be found invalid, because the poor children will not have known what they were doing, or will really have given no consent at all. Still, though sufficient knowledge and consent are all that is strictly required, such youthful marriages are highly unseemly and undesirable. And the Church has very wisely debarred them by the impediment of age, declaring tersely: “No man before the completion of his sixteenth year, no woman before the completion of her fourteenth year can enter on a valid marriage.” You will observe that this is the earliest possible limit. Before the New Code it was fourteen and twelve years respectively, and no one will quarrel with the change. Indeed, the Code itself advises all pastors of souls to dissuade young people, who have barely reached the minimum even now required, from taking so grave a step at so early an age. But if they insist on doing so, they have the right, and the marriage, however foolish, is valid. It is possible, therefore, for the boy who has entered on his seventeenth year and the girl who has entered on her fifteenth to contract wedlock. But need I add that it is fearfully unwise for either to think of assuming the grave responsibilities of the

married state for many years after the law declares them nubile. It is highly desirable that both wait until they learn a lot more about life and about one another than they can have learned in such tender years. "Marry in haste and repent at leisure" embodies the experience of mankind in this matter; and it is rash to run counter to the world's dearly-purchased wisdom. It may be laid down as a safe rule that neither boy nor girl should rush into this lifelong bondage before they are out of their teens.

On the other hand, there is no sense, if they mean to marry at all, in waiting indefinitely. Some are so long about making up their minds that they reach the stage when either nobody will have them or they will have nobody. Undoubtedly it requires something of the fine daring of youth to take the plunge at all. "The world," says Mr. Chesterton, "does not encourage a perfectly wise lover or a perfectly wise soldier; for a perfectly wise lover would never marry, and a perfectly wise soldier would run away." Here in Ireland we have a large proportion, of men particularly, who aim at being perfectly wise. They are so afraid of making a mistake that they never make a proposal. Perhaps they personally never see cause to regret their caution; perhaps they do, for not infrequently such wise people end up with a far from wise selection. But the country certainly cannot encourage a whole host of eccentric old bachelors, with its concomitant host of disappointed old maids. I recall a saying of some old Greek poet which runs, more or less: "It is not well to be wiser than it is given to man to be wise." If anyone wants to be a priest, a monk, or a nun, there are seminaries and noviceships eager to receive candidates and catering for every form of religious vocation. Those who do not aspire to the higher life of religion, should have a little courage and a little humility, and perhaps they will find someone not unwilling and not unworthy to share their loneliness, and by sharing lessen it. The Church, now as always, holds high the counsels of

Christ, and says : *Qui potest capere, capiat.*<sup>1</sup> But she is not unduly enamoured of a whole population seeking for safety first, last, and all the time. She cannot afford it any more than the State ; for she needs priests, monks, and nuns in the next generation, especially now when she is reaching out to ever greater conquests of the vast Paganism that must be brought into the fold of the Great Shepherd. I once knew a little girl whose mother, in a moment of discouragement, said to her : "When you grow up, my child, enter a convent and become a saint." "Ah, no, mamma," said the little one ; "but I'll be the mother of saints." A quick reply, no doubt, yet not quite fair to the mother of saints. For she will usually be found to be a saint herself. Indeed, one might almost say that it takes a saint to be the mother of a saint. And it was a sound instinct which made the early Church canonise, not only its great confessors and doctors, but their mothers as well. It felt that only from saintly mothers can saintly children spring. There are, of course, exceptions, "for no word shall be impossible with God." Yet, in the general run of things, wherever you find a good man you may conclude there has been a good mother. The good father counts too, though not quite so much.

IV. Impotence (N.C. Canon 1068).—But even in adults there exists occasionally a natural defect, impotence, causing physical incapacity for wedlock ; and it constitutes an impediment according to natural and civil law as well as in Canon Law. When expert medical opinion has declared that it existed prior to the marriage and is irremediable, the parties may separate. But the sanction of the Church should first be sought to avoid public wonder and scandal. This defect must not be confused with sterility or inability to have children, which is neither a prohibitive nor invalidating impediment, and need cause no moral difficulty at all.

V. An Existing Marriage (N.C. Canon 1069).—As

<sup>1</sup> "He that can take (them) let him take (them)."

bigamy is contrary to the law of God and marriage is indissoluble, if a person is married to a still living consort, a second union is impossible both by natural and Canon Law. There must be moral certainty of freedom before one can licitly attempt a new marriage, and the fact of freedom before it can be really valid. Where there is not the deliberate will to commit bigamy, difficulty can only arise when either husband or wife has disappeared for a long time and it has become doubtful whether he or she is still living. While such a doubt exists no further marriage may be attempted. Every effort must first be made to clear up the doubt. If all efforts of local authorities fail to settle the question, it should be referred to Rome, which will examine all the evidence and see whether death can be taken for granted or not. If the Roman Court decides that every reasonable misgiving is excluded, then the second marriage may be proceeded with. I need hardly say that the utmost caution is exercised by the ecclesiastical tribunals to make sure of freedom.

VI. Disparity of Worship (N.C. Canon 1070).—We come now to three impediments of purely ecclesiastical origin, established in the interests of religion. The first is called “Disparity of Worship,” which must be clearly distinguished from the prohibitive impediment of “Mixed Religion.” Disparity of Worship is thus explained: “Matrimony contracted between an unbaptised person and one baptised in the Catholic Church or converted to the Church from heresy or schism is null and void.” Before the New Code this impediment was wider in scope and applied to all attempted unions between an infidel and any baptised person whatsoever. Now it is restricted to those baptised within the Church, or those who, though baptised outside the Church, have entered it before the attempted wedding. The Church can, of course, grant a dispensation, and does occasionally for weighty reasons. But if she is opposed to mixed marriages, still more is she opposed to the union of a Catholic with an unbaptised infidel.

VII. Holy Orders (N.C. Canon 1072).—Ecclesiastical discipline, in the Latin Church, at least, has, from the fourth or fifth century onwards, annexed to the reception of the major or more sacred Orders of the Church—namely, subdiaconate, diaconate, and priesthood—the obligation of celibacy. And this obligation has constituted, from at least the twelfth century, a bar or diriment impediment to matrimony. The Code says briefly:—“Clerics in sacred Orders, invalidly attempt marriage.” That is, they may wantonly and wickedly attempt such a union, but it cannot be a legitimate marriage without a dispensation from Rome, which is rarely given to a sub-deacon, still more rarely to a deacon, and hardly ever to a priest. I am sure I need not, in this context, explain or defend the reasons why the Latin Church insists that her ministers shall consecrate their whole being to their high vocation, and be content with that nobler spiritual paternity in Christ, which has won for them from the faithful the honourable title of “Father.”

VIII. Solemn Vows of Religion (N.C. Canon 1073).—Similarly the solemn vows of religion constitute an invalidating impediment to marriage. These are the vows taken in a religious Order, strictly so-called as distinguished from a Congregation with simple vows, which, as we have seen, constitute only a prohibitive impediment unless the Church in special cases decides otherwise.

But all members of religious Orders, whether they be men or women, who make what is known as solemn profession, are incapable of contracting marriage without a dispensation nearly impossible to procure; and they incur heavy censures by attempting it, as do clerics in Holy Orders who act similarly.

IX. Crime (N.C. Canon 1075).—To safeguard the sanctity of the home by penalising adultery and murder the Church has instituted the impediment of crime, which can be incurred in three ways:—

(a) When a man or woman violates the married vow

and commits adultery with a third party, accompanied by a mutual promise of future marriage in case the other party to the marriage should die, the criminal lovers cannot contract a valid marriage. An attempted civil marriage—for example after a civil divorce—is equivalent to the promise of future marriage, and united with adulterous intercourse also effects this impediment.

You will observe that the impediment renders marriage impossible even when the injured spouse is dead, and thus the way apparently cleared for the union of the adulterous couple. Adultery alone does not create the impediment. There is required a pact between the sinful pair about a future marriage when the other partner to the existing marriage shall have passed away. The pact must be absolute, explicit, externally expressed, and accepted by both. Further, both the culprits must be conscious that they are committing adultery—must be aware, that is, that one of them at least is in bonds of wedlock. The impediment is doubled if both are married and both are aware of this fact.

It is well-known that the possibility of divorce often leads to adultery. When people tire of one another they frequently agree that one or other shall commit adultery in easily provable circumstances, or one may force the hands of the other by flagrant infidelity. This impediment aims at precisely the contrary effect. It makes adultery with a view to future marriage, or at least with a pact to that effect, an obstacle to such a marriage, even after death has severed the bond that stood in the way.

(b) Another form of the impediment is when adultery takes place without any pact about future marriage, but instead there is the murder of the other party to the marriage by one or other of the criminal lovers for the purpose of rendering the new union possible. In this case there is no need that there should be a conspiracy to murder.

(c) Such a conspiracy gives us the third way in which the

impediment can arise. For a conspiracy to murder the innocent party to the marriage, followed by the actual murder accomplished through the agency of either of the miscreants, is sufficient of itself without the sin of adultery, to constitute this impediment.

If these conditions seem involved and strange, they are explained by the purpose of the legislation, which is to secure fidelity in marriage and to guard the lives of both husband and wife. It is directed against this "eternal triangle" business, which is for ever being exploited on the stage and in literature, and which, as all know, is the cause of countless horrible crimes—"crimes passionels," as they are called. These crimes are almost unknown in good Catholic countries or circles. They grow in frequency and wickedness in proportion as morals decline. Indeed, they are a very fair index of such a decline. The Impediment of Crime is directed against such an iniquity.

X. Consanguinity (N.C. Canon 1076).—The sanctity of home life also demands that close relatives, who must live together, or at least meet more freely in social intercourse, shall keep legitimate affection within those bounds which right reason and the law of God ordain. Incestuous relationships shock our moral sense very profoundly, and the intermarriage of near relatives is notoriously unhygienic, so that communities where there is not a sufficiently wide field of selection gradually degenerate and suffer from numerous physical evils. Even in the animal world inbreeding tells on stamina and vigour in the end.

Consanguinity is a natural impediment within certain degrees of relationship, and the Church does no more than define, or at most extend, the prescriptions of natural law for wise, for very wise, ends.

The present legislation may be thus briefly outlined :—

1. No one can contract a valid marriage with a direct descendant. Hence a father cannot marry his daughter,

granddaughter, or any further daughter of his line. Mother cannot marry son, grandson, etc. And all this seems so obviously dictated by reason that the Church *never* dispenses from this impediment in the direct line of descent.

2. Uncle cannot marry niece or grandniece; aunt cannot marry nephew or grandnephew. Here the Church very rarely grants dispensations.

3. Brother may not marry sister. Authors dispute whether this is directly and clearly forbidden by natural law. But certain it is that the Church will not grant a dispensation for such a marriage under any circumstances.

4. Finally, first cousins or second cousins cannot intermarry. But here the Church does grant a dispensation for sufficient reasons—reluctantly, however, in all cases, and the more reluctantly the nearer the relationship, especially if it be multiplied; that is, if the propinquity exist through a double common origin, which must be fully explained in any petition for dispensation.

XI. Affinity (N.C. Canon 1077).—Again, to safeguard the home and all domestic intercourse, it is necessary that a certain sanctity should invest the relatives of the spouses in the eyes of the unrelated partner. Otherwise it is clear that family friendships would constitute a grave danger to morals. A husband can, by universal custom, meet more easily the sisters and cousins of his wife than other women. A wife in the same way the brother and male relatives of her husband. There is nothing wrong in this. But there may be danger, and to avert that danger the Church has set up the impediment of Affinity. According to the New Code this impediment arises not only through a consummated marriage, but even through a ratified marriage never consummated. It renders marriage invalid with all relatives of the other spouse in direct line of descent—that is, with father or mother, daughter or son, etc., of deceased husband or wife as the case may be.

In the collateral line between one spouse and the sister or brother, niece or nephew, or first cousin of the other. This impediment is entirely of ecclesiastical origin. But everyone can see how conducive it is to morality and domestic concord. It does not affect the non-baptised. Hence in cases of conversion from infidelity no difficulty arises from it relative to marriages contracted before Baptism.

XII. Public Decency (N.C. Canon 1078).—Further, to avert scandal and the danger of incestuous unions, the Church has instituted an impediment called public propriety or decency. This arises from an invalid marriage, whether consummated or not, or from public and notorious concubinage. It renders null and void any attempted marriage of one of the parties with relatives of the other in the direct line to the second degree. Hence when a man and woman have contracted an invalid marriage, or without the ceremony of marriage have lived in public and notorious concubinage, neither can later contract a marriage with mother or grandmother, daughter or granddaughter, father or grandfather, son or grandson of the other party—a wholesome restriction surely.

XIII. Spiritual Relationship (N.C. Canons 768, 1079).—The Church regards as very sacred the spiritual relationship established at Baptism between the person baptised, on the one hand, and, on the other, the minister of the sacrament and the god-father or god-mother at the christening. Hence she has made of it a diriment impediment. Earlier legislation was wider in its scope. The New Code simply says: “In Baptism the person baptising and the god-father or god-mother contract spiritual relationship only with the person baptised” (Canon 768); and “this spiritual relationship alone invalidates matrimony” (Canon 1079). Even if a lay person, therefore, baptises anybody, as may happen in an emergency, marriage between them is impossible. Similarly god-father cannot marry god-daughter; god-mother god-son. It should be noted that

St. Alphonsus holds it as probable that the impediment does not arise between god-parent and god-child *when the Baptism is a private one caused by danger or sudden necessity.* I suppose it is needless to add that the Church has complete power to dispense from this impediment, seeing that it is an entirely ecclesiastical one.

XIV. Legal Adoption (N.C. Canon 1080). — We have seen already that legal adoption gives rise to an impediment, where the laws of the land so proclaim. But in some countries the civil law makes it a diriment impediment. In that case it is the same in canon law, which on this question adopts the civil legislation and conforms to it.

We have now considered, as fully as was possible, the conditions and impediments relating to this contract. They may seem to many involved and confusing; to some unnecessary, irritating, or meaningless. Well, they do call for careful study on the part of theological students. But for the people most directly concerned they become relatively simple in practice, and if only contracting couples are open and sincere, first with regard to their confessors beforehand, and secondly in replying to the questions which the parish priest or his deputy will put to them, they may banish all doubts from their mind as unfounded. While so far from being meaningless or unnecessary, they are so many outworks and defences of home and home-life that you could not set them aside without imperilling both.

It should never be forgotten that the Christian Church, and she alone, has ever really succeeded in teaching chastity to man. Even for her it is the hardest task, perhaps, of all laid upon her. She is too wise and too experienced to expect that she shall ever prevent passion from rising in spate and flooding much territory of human life. But she does her best. She has traced out the channel along which sexual instinct should run; she has dredged it, banked it, and charted it as clearly as may be. He who will be piloted

by her need fear no moral shipwreck or disaster ; and he has more hopes of temporal happiness than any other. He who will not, may go his way calling it liberty, but he will find himself sooner or later sucked under by the turbid waters or stranded on the mud flats by the way.

## CHAPTER V

### “FOR BETTER—FOR WORSE”

It has always seemed to me that a peculiarly sad significance attaches to the word “worse” of the marriage ceremony. Right at what is supposed to be the crowning moment of two young lives (about to commingle now, as tributary streams combine to form one broader, deeper river); when joy is in their hearts and the love-light in their eyes; when their hopes reach dazzling heights of expectancy, and they look forward to a future of unclouded happiness, the very ritual of the Church breaks in upon their dreams with a note of warning. It hints at a possibility which must, to them in their present mood, seem almost blasphemy to contemplate. “For worse.” But how it can be for worse, that two hearts, which love as never human hearts loved before or shall again—for it is always thus—should be united before God and man? Are these two not made for one another? Does not he find the sun’s rays somehow brighter when they shine upon her hair? And she deem the moonlight and the stars alone romantic when his arm is linked in hers? Was not life a tedious, boring, unsatisfying thing until they met? Did not that inner restlessness, that sense of insufficiency, inadequacy, incompleteness which haunts the soul, vanish when they came to know one another, and felt drawn together as steel and magnet? Why, then, does the Church, in this cold-blooded and inhuman way, break in upon the harmony with a discordant note, suggesting possibilities of disaster? Is it, perchance, a touch of

priestly cynicism, the sarcasm of celibates at the state they have abjured ?

Ah, no, the Church is not cynical, and certainly would not choose such a moment for the manifestation of this unlovely trait. Nor will any priest feel anything but sympathy with the two young voyagers setting out upon the Great Adventure. It is not with any sense of mockery or triumph that he hints at the difficulties and dangers of the rose-strewn path opening up before their feet. But the Church knows that roses grow among thorns, and that under the orange-blossoms pitfalls may lurk ; that the road is likely to be long, and to traverse not only smiling fields and pleasant places, but arid stretches of scrub and sand or very dark defiles. She knows—sad admission against which humanity has struggled since Eden !—that love, that even love, is vain, or at least that there is only one love which will never waver and never disappoint. She has learned, from long experience, that human hearts are wayward and human wills fickle, and that the chances and changes of life are utterly incalculable. She has seen many millions of such couples kneel radiant at her altars, and, later, creep broken-hearted to her tabernacles, seeking some consolation amid the ruins of their edifice of dreams. (Dear God ! what heartache she has witnessed, this venerable mother of mankind, throughout these nineteen hundred years !) And so she says : “Even now I want you to face every contingency, with your wills firmly set upon your great purpose of steadfast and unwavering fidelity till death brings the pang of parting, or—the joy of release. You are not embarking on a fairy voyage through enchanted seas. Rather you are entering into a serious and irrevocable engagement to share another being’s multi-coloured existence, to rejoice in its joys, grieve in its sorrows, take part in its fight with adverse circumstance—nay, more, put up with its weaknesses, limitations and defects, greater perhaps than as yet you can imagine. Do you realise all this, and yet say “Yes” ? You do ? Bravo ! you do

well. But now look to it that you honour your engagement. God is witness to it, and seals it with His sacramental grace. He will watch over your fulfilment of it, and your judgment at His hands will largely turn on that fulfilment."

One of the ends of matrimony is the happiness of the young couple themselves. It is not the primary end, as we have seen. But it may often be the strongest motive, if not the only one, consciously inspiring the lovers themselves. Some are so selfish that no other motive weighs much with them. And they come together because it seems to them that thus they can best, or thus alone, find happiness. Let us not be too hard on human infirmity, or expect too lofty ideals from the generality of mankind. Let us admit that they are fully entitled to look for happiness in and through their marriage. Let us even admit that they would be extremely foolish to enter on this state without fair prospects of such happiness. Only let us remind them that marriage was not just instituted for their happiness, nor sexual instinct implanted for its own sake alone. Rather Nature baits the trap with a romantic allurement to induce men and women to fulfil the purpose it has in view—the continuation of life on earth, the preservation of the species. And should felicity not result, even still they must endure the consequences of their choice. They have to carry their cross, and far be it from me to say that it is not a heavy cross. It must indeed be "a sorrow's crown of sorrow" when such a couple waken up from love's young dream to find that it was only a dream, which vanishes from before their waking eyes. Ah, no; there is tragedy here, tragedy unalloyed and unrelieved. If men ever lightly jest about it, I think it must only be on the principle enunciated by the poet: "For if I laugh at any mortal thing, 'tis that I may not weep." The delicate ear will often detect under the loudest human laughter a deep, deep undertone of tears.

In this chapter I am going to ask myself the question :

Are disappointment and disillusionment inevitable? Must men and women always fall from the golden summits which their feet have trodden during the courtship and honeymoon? Must the roses wither and their very perfume fade from memory? That this sometimes happens who can deny? St. Alphonsus Liguori once wrote that he heard the confidences of married women for many years and never knew one who was happy. Let us hope that, if he was not exaggerating, he was defining happiness very exactingly. He was writing to nuns, and perhaps his zeal to make them content influenced unconsciously his sombre account of their married sisters. But with any definition of happiness the truth is melancholy enough. Many find in marriage not the attainment of their heart's desire, but the death-knell of all their hopes. There is a verse by a humorous poet which is not without its justification in reality:—

"I saw two men by the roadside sit,  
And both bewailed their lot;  
For one had buried his wife, he said,  
And the other one had not."

And so one is heartbroken because his helpmate is gone, the other because she is still with him. And it might just as well have been two women, except that the rhythm of the lines forbade it. There are women who weep far from conventional tears when their life's partner leaves them, and others who have reason at least to weep that he remains. You see I must hold the balance even, and I am quite willing to grant that, if anything, the greater reason for disappointment in wedlock rests with the weaker sex.

But, if we must admit that only too often marriage fails to bring contentment, must we also concede that this is inevitable? It were, indeed, a sad necessity, and I like to think that we are not forced to any such pessimistic conclusion. I venture even, greatly daring, to suggest some counsels that may prevent it.

The first advice is an obvious one. Choose carefully. Do not rush headlong under the impulse of passion into this very momentous decision. There is no need to wait indefinitely, but there is need to pause and weigh well all the circumstances of the case. Infatuated calf-love, as it is called, which pauses not to consider and is not tested by any term of probation, affords but a sorry basis for a lifelong partnership. How often the people we find charming on first acquaintance prove very different on longer experience. The knowledge of one another gained during a few dances or joy-rides can hardly be called adequate. Anyone can wear a mask during a *bal masqué*. Anyone can be sweet-tempered and agreeable when there is nothing to try the temper. Most people can look like gentlemen or ladies when they are wearing frockcoats or the latest fashions from Paris, and are seen in the subdued light of the ballroom, or the still more subdued light of the sitting-out alcove. Perhaps you know the lines of the poetess :—

“ ‘Yes,’ I answered you last night,  
‘No,’ I say to you to-day ;  
Colours seen by candle light  
Do not look the same by day.”

Oh, wait a little and see how the colours look under the sunshine, see whether they can stand its rays without fading, see whether this accomplished-looking and polite young gentleman, or this bewitching young lady, is dyed in the wool, is Nature’s gentleman or Nature’s lady, before you commit all your happiness to his or her keeping.

But you will say, “It is not easy to know.” Quite true. It has been cynically said : “The search for a good wife is like a hunt for an eel in a barrel of snakes.” Most ungallant words, to which the ladies might reply that the most *they* can ever hope for is the best of a bad lot. Epigrams carry us no way at all in this matter. But the fact that choice is always delicate and difficult is no argument

for young people shutting their eyes and plunging blind-fold over the abyss.

Further, in their study of one another, spiritual endowments, the qualities of head and heart, habits and dispositions, should take precedence of mere external appearances or surface accomplishments. The former wear well, the latter age and fade. Oh, you young love-sick swain! if you marry "that schoolgirl complexion" or that Paris frock, you are so foolish as to be past praying for. Do you not see that the complexion must fade, and that the frocks must cost? And you, languishing shepherdess, if you espouse the Tango or the Charleston of your Colin, do you not see that he may find other partners in the dance, when you are at home minding the baby, or have lost the agility that once enraptured him? "It is the heart which makes the man; the rest are bagatelles," says an old Roman proverb.

But let us suppose the choice made, and wisely made, what next by way of advice? Well, it is strange and may appear paradoxical, but seems to me quite sound. Do not look for happiness and you may find it. "What?" I can hear some say, "this is jesting with us, and besides, contradicts what has been said before." In appearance only. What I mean is this: The golden rule of life for married or unmarried alike is not to expect too much from it. Then they need not fear disappointment. For what is the source of all our feverish longings and regrets? Is it not that we pitch our hopes too high, asking more from life than it can give, and from fallen human nature more than it can accomplish even with the aid of grace? We think in Springtime that the birds will sing the livelong year and the forget-me-nots bloom into December. Nor can time wholly cure us of our illusion. One disenchantment follows on another. Yet we just go on weaving anew our Penelope-web of expectation. Spider-like, we start spinning afresh the filmy meshes in which we hope to catch the winged joys that we hear humming in the air

around us. Or, again, we see others suffer shipwreck; but we refuse to contemplate the possibility that our vessel may founder in the storms. Nay, we are so prone to foolish confidence in our own exceptional importance in the eyes of Providence that we neglect the precaution of having lifeboats or lifebelts on board. We say, as St. Peter said, "Even if all others, yet not I," and pay, like him, the price of our presumption. Time, the great reaper, reaps our April hopes, and leaves us with an armful of withered grasses, which we preserve as mournful mementos of departed joys, or burn in disgust, seeking in cynicism, if not in revolt against Providence, some relief from the pangs of regret which consume us. But neither is of much avail.

What if we started with a plainer and saner realisation of the facts of life? The first of these is vouched for by the Holy Spirit Himself: "We have not here a lasting city, but seek one that is to come." It is because we forget this—because we seek here and now the perfect peace which Christ has warned us the world cannot give—it is for this reason we are always deceived. And we must be for ever deceived, until we realise that even our home is but an oasis on a desert journey, a halting place on a road to more ultimate things.

I am well aware that modern mentality has largely lost its receptivity for this kind of consideration. Many, even fervent Christians, may be found to murmur, or half murmur, in their hearts: "Oh, yes, we know all that, and accept it, because it is in the Scripture. But still we want something more, something here and now, some little sunshine this side of the Great Divide. We do not think that being unhappy here is the necessary prelude to being happy hereafter." Neither do I; but I do think that looking too exclusively and too greedily for happiness here has the ironical consequence that we find it neither here nor hereafter. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." These words of Christ

stand. The Christian message is one vast paradox, and life is paradoxical, and happiness is like a woman who scorns the too humble suitor to throw herself at the very feet of him who treats her with disdain. The world itself is at the mercy of him who despises it, and spurns with contumely all who fawn upon its smiles.

Hence I repeat, in my philosophy of things, the secret of not being disappointed with your partner in life is not to expect too much from him or her. The cause of much domestic misery is the absurd atmosphere of romance created by the mass of fiction on which the imagination of youth is fed. For tell me, my dear reader, did you ever see in the flesh anybody remotely resembling the heroine of a love-novel? With star-like eyes, ruby lips and pearly teeth, cheeks white as the snowdrop where not red as the carnation, hair gleaming like gold, and, finally, in intellect as wise as the Ancient Sibyl and as witty as a dialogue by Bernard Shaw? Or, on the other hand, if you search the city with lamps, like the old Cynic philosopher, will you find a man like the hero, as brave and handsome as Cuchulain or Conall Cearnach, uniting the muscles of a Milo to the chivalry of Bayard and the devotion of Sir Bedivere? When the youth is looking for the former in some ordinary daughter of Eve, is he not likely to get a rude awakening some day? When the maiden is dreaming of the latter, is she not steering straight for disillusionment? If he started with eyes that were not blinded, the scales would not fall off later on. If she had not invested some quite, decent and respectable, but normal, male biped with qualities no man could possibly combine, she would not in a few years be wondering what she had seen in this husband of hers, who is cross if the dinner is cold, and would run away from a barking terrier, not to speak of a roaring lion.

For my part, I have seen but one proposal in fiction which had the ring of sense about it. It is found in a work by Mr. Chesterton, that admirable philosopher in motley who has uttered very many wise things to the

jingling of his bells. The scene is a London boarding-house. A new arrival proposes to one of the lady lodgers within twenty-four hours. Then a certain Irishman, named Michael, catches the infection and proposes to another, with whom he had been on good terms for some time. She demurs, and dwells upon the evils of "im-prudent marriages."

"Imprudent marriages," roared Michael. "And pray ! where on earth or in heaven are there any prudent marriages ? Might as well talk of prudent suicides. You and I have dawdled round each other long enough, and are we any safer than Smith and Mary Gray who met last night ? You never know a husband till you marry him. Un-happy ! Of course you'll be unhappy. Who are you that you shouldn't be unhappy like the mother that bore you ? Disappointed ! Of course, you'll be disappointed. I, for one, do not expect till I die to be so good a man as at this minute ; for just now I'm fifty thousand feet high—a tower with all the trumpets shouting."

"You see all this," said Rosamund, with a grand sincerity in her solid face, "and do you really want to marry me ? "

"My darling, what else is there to do ? " roared the Irishman. "What other occupation is there for an active man on this earth except to marry you ? What's the alternative to marriage, barring sleep ? It's not liberty, Rosamund. Unless you marry God, as our nuns do in Ireland, you must marry Man—that is, me. The only third thing is to marry yourself—to live with yourself, yourself, yourself—the only companion that is never satisfied and never satisfactory."

"Michael," said Miss Hunt in a very soft voice, "if you won't talk so much I'll marry you."

I think that couple never came within sight of the divorce court. You see she started with the realisation that he talked too much. And it has been well said : "Women have to learn to bear the stories of the men they

love. It is the curse of Eve.” They must continue to simulate an interest in their fads and hobbies, in their fishing, shooting or golf. They must listen patiently to the hundredth repetition of how he got the ninth hole in two under bogey. They must always have ready a mechanical smile for his jokes—and that is no joke over years. Similarly, if Michael recognised her face as solid, it was much better than writing sugary sonnets on her eyebrows. Further, he must have felt that she accepted him to put an end to his shouting. Hence he was likely to make some allowance, if later on her patience gave way when he could not check the exuberance of his Irish eloquence. All solid contentment must be based on truth. If based on falsehood, exaggeration, or make-believe it cannot last. For truth, like murder, will out, and then there may be murder or the temptation to it.

Why, ah ! why, cannot even enamoured mortals be got to understand that no one, man or woman, is always good company ? Even the wise are occasionally otherwise; even the witty are sometimes dull as a stagnant pool. It is quite a commonplace that the pantomime clown is often a lugubrious being in his own home. And it is history that some of the greatest humorists ended in melancholia, witness our own Swift ? One of the truest sayings I ever read is this : “The last vanity to vanish is the belief that we are more interesting than others.” But can even this vanity long survive the yawns of our listeners ? Are we not often utterly weary of ourselves ? How can we hope, then, that others will find us eternally entertaining ? So I say to the husband who is beginning to feel the company of his wife dull—the little patch of cloud upon the horizon which heralds in the storm—“What about yourself ? Are you never wearisome to her ? Never out of sorts—moody, silent, irritable ? Do you keep smiling when things go ill, and uncomplaining when the head aches, or the liver is torpid, or indigestion punishes your prandial excesses ? If not, bear with her human infirmities.”

And to you, madam, who are growing restless, I say : “ If he gets upon your nerves, pray tell me have you a monopoly of that universal excuse ? Perhaps his nerves, too, prick and tingle ; perhaps he is smarting under a reprimand from his superiors, or an insult from his equals, or insolence from his inferiors. Perhaps he has difficulties with the banker, which he wishes to spare you till you must know. Yet you go on nagging at him because he is not quite as thoughtful, quite as observant of the little amenities, as he was in the early days, when all around the woodlands of life rang with the songs of Spring. Be a little patient, and you will find out all—of course you will, being a woman—and then you will put both heads together and solve the problem, and he will wonder at your wisdom, and will take you into his confidence earlier next time.”

To both I say : “ Please remember you have espoused a human soul inhabiting so many stones of human flesh—both suffering from the result of that Original Sin for which the two sexes share the responsibility. Get rid of the angel in the flesh theory. Angels do not dwell in flesh. Cut out the Apollo Belvidere conception. Apollo was a myth, and the statue a block of marble ; and no woman wants to imitate Pygmalion, who fell in love with the marble he had chiselled into a human form. But if you both want a consort of flesh and blood, do not expect too much from any being bearing around the weight of our mortality.”

Yet I fancy I can still hear murmurs of criticism. Some lady may find the thought rising to her lips : “ No, I did not take my views of life from novelettes or novels. Neither did I ever imagine I was marrying a demi-god. But I thought I was marrying a man, and not a brute who would never have a kind word for me, who would blame me for everything that went wrong in the house or out of it—nay, who would even use the cowardly argument of blows.” The gentleman, on his side, might put it thus :

"No, I never at any time deceived myself with the illusion that she was an angel let down from heaven. But surely I had a right to believe that she was not a vixen, a spit-fire, one who can carry offensiveness to the point of inspiration, who can pose as a martyr of my cruelty while making my life a nightmare!" Well, I agree with both. You had a right to expect better things. But how has it come to this sad pass? It was not always thus. You started with a comfortable capital of love. You would have been very foolish to do otherwise. But what has become of it? How have you squandered your little store, so that now there is a heavy overdraft in Cupid's bank and no prospect of clearing it off?

The answer is very various. Sometimes it is fairly clear that there was a mistake at the start. What looked like two affinities were in reality two incompatibilities. They plunged rashly; they married in haste, and now have only too much leisure to repent. And one can only advise them to sanctify their repentance by asking God to give them mutual tolerance and esteem.

Sometimes, too, a big disaster falls like lightning upon a hitherto united couple, and leaves them suddenly shivering in a roofless home, at a hearth where nothing remains but dying embers. These things happen, no doubt, as earthquakes happen, or plagues, or whirlwinds. But such great and sudden calamities are rare, thank God! and when they do occur, men can only steel their courage and pray for patience to endure.

In the generality of cases it is not a sudden, overwhelming blow that changes the whole aspect of life. No, it is the slow friction of daily fretfulness, daily disagreements, daily worries. It begins with slight "tiffs," as they are called, which at first blow over soon, leaving only just a little soreness. But these have a tendency, unless watched, to multiply and grow more serious until they end in a permanent estrangement. Of course for a long time both parties keep up appearances—sometimes

heroically and over years. But keeping up appearances is no easy matter, and salves their pride at most : it does not heal their hearts. Generally speaking, it proves too much for them, and the mask is dropped—first before the servants, who are quick to perceive the lie of the land, and then before the neighbours, who, if they do not actually rejoice at it, see no reason why they should not enliven their afternoon teas or bridge-parties with the discussion of it. In aggravated cases the priest is called in, and in still more aggravated cases the policeman. But the priest can only advise them to have sense (which must have vanished long ago or it would never have come to this), to make it up and start again (much easier said than done), or, finally, to go together to the Altar and renew the spirit in which they first knelt together there. As for the policeman or the magistrate what can they do except “bind them to keep the peace”—a cruel touch of irony when there is no peace left to keep.

Oh, it is such a pity that they do not take alarm at the first signs of trouble. Those “little tiffs” could be so easily avoided if both were on their guard. The Scripture says : “ He who despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.” Every couple who have to live perpetually in the close, daily intercourse of married life should bear this well in mind. Just as little kindnesses, little courtesies, little acts of thoughtfulness nourish love, so little quarrels, little displays of selfishness or suspicion or rudeness can quench it almost imperceptibly. Thomas Moore once wrote :—

“ Alas ! how light a cause may move  
Dissension between hearts that love—  
Hearts that the world in vain had tried,  
And sorrow but more closely tied ;  
Which stood the storm when waves were rough,  
Yet in a sunny hour fall off ;  
Like ships that have gone down at sea  
When heaven was all tranquillity.”

Sometimes a badly-cooked dinner causes the first rift in the lute. He originally became convinced that she was the ideal woman when he danced the Charleston with her (or whatever other atrocity prevailed at the moment). That she might not be equally expert at housekeeping or cooking never entered his mind. Such vulgar details do not arise, until it is too late to reconsider things. But though vulgar they are real, and the women who neglect them are foolish indeed. That was a wise old woman in the story who gave a young bride this advice: "Remember, my dear, kissing don't last ; cookery do." But the modern girl is not very strong on cookery. After all, there are so many really serious calls upon her time—tennis, golf, bridge, dances, cinemas, motor drives—that it is absurd to suppose such old-fashioned trifles as a cookery book or an account book should enter into her calculations—till it is too late. Besides, the modern girl is in revolt against the idea that a wife should be a cook and housekeeper as well. That notion went out with the crinoline ; it is antiquated in these days of short skirts and women's rights ! Well, perhaps ; but man is a hungry animal, and is likely to grow very objectionable if not decently fed. It is gross on his part, no doubt. He ought to be content that his wife still wears the smartest costumes to be seen in the ball-room, and can trip it with the youngest maiden on the floor. But the truth is that he will not remain content, and a wise woman will take lessons in cooking before it is too late. She will try to make home a home, or she will find the working hours of her husband lengthening out prodigiously, without any apparent increase of income for overtime.

But, of course, quite as frequently the husband is to blame, and has not the excuse of bad cooking or bad house-keeping. The pledge against drink which he took before marriage has gone the way of many another good resolution. Or he has picked up again with the old cronies of his bachelor days, and dines now very frequently

at a club or an hotel, where the wines and cigars are notoriously good, if somewhat expensive. Or, perhaps, his former interest in horse-racing revives, and he is too busy watching the favourites lose to think very much of his wife. When he does get home, he is restless and snappish. Further, he has squandered or lost so much money on his own personal pleasures that he finds the house bills or the dress bills wildly extravagant. This is naturally exasperating on the patience of one who knows that she has been more than moderate in her demands. There is thus gradually piled up, by faults on one side or the other, an amount of moral gunpowder on the hearth to go off with a bang some day.

Or, again, there is the husband who plays the petty domestic tyrant, who interferes in all the little details of the home, who insists strongly on the words of St. Paul : "Wives, be obedient unto your husbands, as unto the Lord," but forgets the words that follow in the very same context : "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it." And that leads us to the great and delicate question as to who should rule in the house. I am fully conscious that I am treading on dangerous ground here, or even playing temerariously with a hand-grenade. It is fairly clear that someone must have the final say in things, if there is to be order at all. It is also commonly asserted that a woman likes the last word. And the feminist movement of recent years is characterised by a definite challenge to the old tradition by which the husband, as head of the house, was regarded as entitled even to obedience on the part of the wife. This movement has recently scored a triumph by the elimination of the word "obey" from the Anglican ritual. Whether the change will mean much or anything remains to be seen. But it does not solve the dilemma we have put ourselves. If there is a clash of wills whose should prevail ? St. Paul seems to infer the husband's. But the modern lady exclaims indignantly : "I don't hold with St. Paul, and at any

rate I won't obey"—which is true enough in all probability.

If I might hazard a conjecture on so delicate a point, I would say that the whole question is academic rather than practical. When two people come together and live so closely linked as man and wife do, there is, and there must be, a slow duel of personalities, and the stronger personality prevails by a law that no legislator can alter. But if you suppose that by that is meant the general triumph of the man, I think you are mistaken. In three cases out of four it may well be the woman who will prevail. If, however, she cannot assert her will against his domination no *Magna Charta* wrung from any king will alter matters by a hair's-breadth. We ought to have outlived the illusions we once fostered as to the value of political experiment. The very question of woman suffrage should prove the futility of constitutional enactment to effect any very vast social alteration. Some years ago women were throwing hatchets at Prime Ministers in order to get the vote. And now there is question of passing a law to make them vote. They have grown suddenly indifferent to the toy—as indifferent as the men themselves. Hence I do not believe that agitation and legislation will bring about any new heaven or new earth for the weaker sex. I hope it will not be inferred from this that I am against women's rights or stand for their immemorial wrongs. Far from it; I hope that social legislation will tend more and more to protect their interests. And it seems to me that life is still very far from being equitably adjusted in their regard. Only I am frankly sceptical of the extent to which Dail or Senate or Parliament can mend matters. Above all, I think they cannot solve the problem of "Home Rule" or decide who shall be "the Home Ruler."

The happiest solution I have ever heard is contained in a story told of Themistocles, the leader of the Athenian democracy when it was rising to the headship of Greece.

A friend visited him one day, and found him with his little son, who was sprawling on the floor as boys will. Pointing to him the statesman said : " Do you see that child ? He rules the world." " How so," inquired the visitor. " Well, you see, he rules his mother, his mother rules me, I rule the Athenians, and the Athenians rule the world." Now, ladies, does not that give the best hierarchy that can possibly be devised ? Are you content ? No. You want something more than a pretty story. You want me to decide the question and not evade it, as I have obviously done so far. Well, if I must, I must at whatever cost to myself. The Church does regard authority in the home as vested in the husband, and though she refrains from putting the word " obey " on the lips of brides, she does address to them those words of St. Paul : " Wives, be obedient unto your husbands, as unto the Lord." Yes, but let me make haste to add that, though he is ruler, he is no tyrant. If he forgets his part, which is to love his wife as Christ loves the Church, why, then, his charter falls. And if he loves her, will she find it hard to obey, or will the question ever arise at all ?

May I, in conclusion, give you my own very Jesuitical contribution to this thorny and burning controversy ? All have heard of a limited monarchy such as we find in England, where the King has all the titles of honour any man could desire. Everything is done in his name. You would think the sun rose at his appointment. And yet he has hardly any power at all. As you know, it is the politicians, the financiers, and the Press-magnates who really rule. It is the Prime Minister who writes the King's Speech, and all His Majesty is allowed to do is to read it and retire from the scene. If he really tried to rule, those same politicians, who pay him such lip-service now, would probably lop his head off, as their predecessors did to Charles I.

Now, apply all this to the home. The husband should be a limited monarch. He should have the title but no

real power. He should be a strictly constitutional king, in whose name all things are done, but the wife should be Prime Minister and Cabinet on whose tolerance he exists. Only—and this is the Jesuitical touch—he must never, never for a moment suspect that he is any less autocratic than were the Czars. The truth is, my dear ladies, and I think you know it already, he is a poor, weak-witted bundle of vanity, and if you flatter him sufficiently with the appearance of deference, you can always do what you like. Only do not ask him to go down on his knees and abdicate. By all means, lay your chains around him. But weave the roses about them that he may never feel the iron galling his neck. In the happy home the wife and mother reigns as queen, but as a queen of hearts. She reigns by love. Where love is wanting, I do not see what can replace it. Where it exists, I do not see what more is needed. For love solves all the tangled problems of the married state. If, then, to-day there is such widespread discontent, such chafing under the restraints of married life, I can only conclude that it is because men and women are ceasing not merely to love God but even to love one another. For that state of affairs I have no remedy to prescribe except the obvious one, that they return to the love of God, and, through this divine energy, to that love of one another which will make the yoke sweet and the burden light. "For where there is love, there is no toil, or if there be toil, the toil itself is loved."

## CHAPTER VI

### “THE UNCONSCIOUS KING”

Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. For of such is the Kingdom of God. (Mark x. 14.)

THE baby has been called “The Bald-headed Tyrant from No-Man’s Land”; and the quaint title is not unjustified. For he is bald-headed usually, a tyrant always, and he steals mysteriously from the darkness of the great deep behind us into the sunshine and shadow of our little day, only to fade again, after a brief span, into the great deep beyond. We are bald-headed tyrants at two stages of existence—in our first and second childhood. But the unlovely tyranny we exercise when we are doting is very different from the unconscious sceptre we wield when we ourselves are “dotes.” It is true that we may well be “dotes” only in two pairs of deluded eyes. But what of that? God is good to childhood, and usually provides it with some potent spell that can enchant at least the four eyes that really matter in its regard. It would go ill with many from the very start, if it were not for this most merciful disposition of Providence, which makes us lovely and lovable at least to those who must submit themselves for years to our most despotic and capricious sway.

We have already solved the very delicate question of the hierarchy in the home, by saying that the child should rule the mother, the mother the father, and the father the State. We shall now turn our attention to this unconscious king, who possesses such power and sets up such claims.

And first, let us have a good look at him. But as he is

at once so precious and so fragile, we shall leave him in the nurse's arms. He might slip from our clumsy fingers and become just a little snowball on the floor, with whatever sized soul animates him winging its way to join the angels. The cynic would suggest that that might be the best thing could happen to him, and might save the world from a ne'er-do-well or a criminal. But cynicism is always an example of that half-truth which is the worst of lies. For, on the other hand, we might be robbing the country of a hero, the world of a benefactor, or the Church of a saint. So, as God has decreed to give him his chance for good or evil, let us respect the Divine decree, and leave him safely in the nurse's arms.

But we may look at him ; for the least of his subjects may look upon a king. And certainly the first thing we note about him is the absence of regal dignity. You do not know whether to laugh at the absurd figure he cuts, or to weep at the helpless spectacle he presents. The ancient Mexicans wept at a birth and rejoiced at a burial. We invert the procedure ; but it is not clear which attitude is right. The sense of tears in human things can never be far away when we gaze at life's beginning. This little human atom is as helpless a creature as God has made. He is so frail and subject to so many ailments that we have to have special doctors and hospitals for him. He is hardly out of one malady till he is into another. What food to give him is a problem discussed wherever mothers meet. When he cries, is it because he is hungry or overfed ; too cold or feverish from too much clothes ? There is no end to the problems he brings into hitherto tranquil lives. Then, too, he is expensive. There is the cradle and the perambulator, the nurse, doctor's bills, and bills for all the patent medicines that only just fail to kill him. Altogether an exorbitant tyrant, and you may not dethrone him. He reigns by right divine, the only monarch revolution cannot drive into exile. And the father and mother owe him such fealty as they can owe to no one else. They have to look

after his bodily and spiritual welfare. For the moment the latter will cause little difficulty. When the regenerating waters of Baptism have been poured on his head, all has been done that can be done to spiritualise him for years to come.

Wordsworth once wrote of him, that “ trailing clouds of glory he has come, from God Who is his home.” But, then, Wordsworth was a poet, and poets are as foolish as mothers, and utter “an infinite deal of nonsense, more than any men in all Venice.” They see in things what the plain mortal cannot fathom. Thus, Francis Thompson, the bard of childhood, has written : “ Know you what it is to be a child ? It is to have a spirit yet streaming from the waters of Baptism ; it is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief ; it is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper in your ear ; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowliness into loftiness, and nothing into everything. For each child has its fairy godmother in its own soul. It is to live in a nutshell and to count yourself a king of infinite space ; it is

“ To see a world in a grain of sand,  
And heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour ; ”

it is to know not as yet you are under sentence of life, nor petition that it be commuted into death. When we become conscious in dreaming that we dream, the dream is on the point of breaking ; when we become conscious in living that we live, the ill dream is only just beginning.”

But his majesty in the nurse’s arms is merely laughing at us and all this. He is saying to the poor poet : “ What stuff you write ! Give me my gollywog.” And when we look again, the trailing clouds of glory, the elves and all the rest, vanish into thin air, and we see only a gurgling little mite, waving something at us that on closer inspection we discover to be intended for a hand.

And yet, if we consult them, the philosophers and theologians have things to say of this insignificant atom in white which make the wildest flights of poetic fancy appear prosaic. He is lord of the world. For him the earth spins on its axis every day, and makes its annual circuit round the sun. For him the seasons come and go, and “work the wild wonder of their will” upon the changing face of skies and on the teeming bosom of our mother earth. For him the tides of ocean rise and fall—“moving waters on their priest-like task of pure ablution round earth’s human shore”; the rivers quit their home amid the hills, and push their way through cloven gorge and spreading plain until they reach the term of their quest, the sea. For him the moon shines pale and spectral over midnight waters, and the nightingale broadcasts his loves and sorrows on the palpitating air. For him the stars make music, as they wheel in space, showing like apertures in heaven’s floor through which the glory of the Presence shines.

Nay, more—much more; for him God’s love was active or ere the mountains rose, or valleys sank, or the grasses learned to grow. “He has loved him with an everlasting love.” For him, when he fell in his first parents, the Word Divine said, “Lo, I come,” and, in the fullness of time, took flesh, became a baby in a manger-cradle—“A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us”—and shared our sad human life, until He drained the chalice to the lees, and died upon the cross of shame. And here the tongue falters, language fails, the mind itself is stunned.

But can you marvel that a Church which believes these things bids us kneel in reverence, not only at our Christmas Crib, but at every cradle where a son of man lies sleeping? What wonder that a German poet wrote: “Art, the heaven-born, sets nothing holier before our eyes, nor the Church, the divine, aught holier than the Mother with her Babe.”

Hence, O ye parents! you owe this unconscious monarch, this brother of Christ, this heir of all the promises, such loyal homage and faithful service as it is in your power to give. Your lives are dedicate to him. And woe unto you if you prove traitors to my Lord the King!

For the time being it is his bodily welfare alone which engages attention. He has a soul, no doubt, but as yet it is blissfully incapable of good or evil. But the frail little life needs care and watching. On the mother particularly is cast a responsibility which is the first premonition of old age. Now she knows that youth is past. It is this, I think, that the modern women resents. Maternity means farewell to youth, not necessarily in outward seeming, but in inward feeling. Well, it is in the bond she twined around herself at the altar, and there is no escape except by a dereliction of duty, which of itself can also bring the haggard features of remorse. To do the sex justice, few fail in goodwill (unless drink has unsexed a woman, as, of course, *it* will). Many fail in knowledge and wisdom, and go near to killing, if they do not actually kill, by false kindness. But I must leave all such to the Infant Aid Society. I would be quitting my last very foolishly, if I tried to offer advice.

I will only say that the spectacle of childhood trying to survive poverty, squalor, neglect, underfeeding, or false feeding is very tragic. For the handicap in health that is thus entailed is one that can never be overtaken. Many a man or woman is beaten in the race of life right from the starting-post. It is mysteriously sad to see poor little waifs launched on the long, long journey which calls for so much strength and courage and stamina, with no chance of acquiring any of these. Small wonder that we meet so many adults in whose weak and wandering eyes one reads defeat and soul-surrender. They make no fight, because they inherited weakness, or weakness visited their starved cradle, and failure marked them for its own. Certainly a heavy responsibility rests on somebody when this happens,

perhaps on the whole community which allows it to happen, and is fittingly punished later on by an incubus of drones and wastrels, or worse.

Most of all, the mother is called upon to see that the child gets a fair start in life. And Nature, certainly, has done her best to secure this end by infusing into the maternal heart the strongest, loveliest and most devoted love we know. But the father, too, has his part to play. He has got to see to it that the mother has the wherewithal to feed the child and herself, and is relieved from other anxieties to concentrate upon her precious charge.

And here I think a protest called for. One sees from time to time such worthless fathers that you feel there ought to be a special penitentiary for them. You cannot call them men ; for, after all, "man" is a word of noble connotation. They marry without any prospect of ever being able to support either wife or child. Indeed, in many cases they seem to reckon on the wife supporting them. At any rate, that is how it turns out only too often. They are work-shy, but this is the only shyness that possesses them. They never find employment, because they never really want to find it, or because they are so utterly incompetent that employers pass them by. Yet somehow they contrive to find food and drink. They return nightly to the poor woman, who has been sewing or charring all day long to earn bread and milk for the children. She is to be congratulated if the wretched parasite does not devour this and leave her and the children to starve. The number of homes where the very roof-tree seems to rest on some over-driven woman's shoulders is humiliating to contemplate for any man who loves his sex. The heroism that is sometimes shown under the unfair burden is the only redeeming feature of the shameful spectacle. But, of course, the struggle kills, and the unfortunate woman dies with the heart-rending thought that she leaves the children to the poorhouse. Such sordid tragedies are only too frequent in the land ; and sometimes I ask myself does Ireland

breed a higher percentage than other countries of utterly worthless men, who from childhood to old age—for they usually do reach old age—never earn or think of earning the food they consume?

I do not wish to indict my sex in general, and I admit that there are also plenty of women who are equally useless—an encumbrance on society or worse. But I am afraid that, where the children are concerned, it is the father who fails more often than the mother. Unless the latter drinks—in which case, of course, nothing can be expected of her—she will as a rule fight for her children until death. The male wastrels exceed, I fear, in number the female wastrels. And between them they constitute an economic handicap on the nation which is imperilling its very existence. The supreme need of the moment is industry, creative industry, and I do not think we shall ever emerge from our chronic poverty unless we all take off our coats and work, work honestly, steadily, efficiently. Nor am I now wandering from my theme, the child. We all want to see our population grow and live at home. We do not desire to see the conditions of the past—aye, and of the present—continue. If we are not smitten with that blindness which is the sign of Divine anger, we shall not indefinitely look on while the children of the race grow up only to fill the emigrant ship, if healthy enough to get through Ellis Island, and to become a burden on the rates if not. To me it seems absolutely imperative that the yearly haemorrhage of emigration be checked if the Irish nation is not to perish in its ancient home. We cannot, simply cannot, afford the yearly loss of 40,000 of the flower of our youth. It must be stopped under penalty of national extinction. A cripples' home is not a nation.

Many are loud-voiced with political panaceas for this running wound in the nation's side. These I do not mean even to touch on here. But anyone, not blinded by political passion, can see that without a general and universal spirit of industry, sobriety, and thrift, political change can only

mock us with empty promises. Political and economic policies are not negligible things. Far from it; they deserve the most careful and anxious study. But that they can ever replace the personal efficiency and devoted toil of the individual is the vainest of illusions. We must work, work with hand and work with brain, with harmony and unanimity, with science no less than with muscle, if we are not to remain a sort of human ranch from which the nations of the world will come and carry off the best stock till nothing is left but exhausted strains and degenerating breeds. For a century now Ireland has been governed by an utterly unbiological law—the survival of the unfittest. And we must bestir ourselves to alter that by developing all the land’s resources, and so creating possibilities for the little children now resting in their cradles. We may well imagine them crying out from these, as Patrick heard them crying from the Wood of Foclut by the Western sea : “Come and save us. Save us from the slums of New York, Chicago, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. Do not ask us to grow up only to shear sheep on Australasian farms, or fell timber in Canadian wilds. We have been the world’s hod-carriers long enough. Can we never hope for a life in Erin and a grave in Erin, where round crumbling churches or monasteries, amid half-buried crosses, our forefathers have found the place of their resurrection ? ”

But our little tyrant has fallen asleep, blissfully incurious of the future. Let us leave him, then, to his cradle for the present, and reach forward in imagination to the time when the eyes of reason open and the soul awakes. Now the parents’ really serious task begins. They have, no doubt, in most cases done enough for his body, and, in any event, Nature has triumphed. His mind is growing hungry now ; what food shall it receive ? His eyes are growing curious now ; what sights shall they behold ? Oh ! ye parents, who pretend to love your children, look well to both ; for the lessons learned at this early stage can never be wholly

forgotten ; and the examples, for good or evil, which meet its gaze may well determine the young soul's destiny.

A German pedagogue once wrote that a child's character was definitely shaped before its seventh year. This may well be an exaggeration. But certainly the moulding of character begins early, and begins in the home. The spirit of the home forms the dispositions as nothing else, except perhaps heredity, can. If that spirit is the right one, the young heart blossoms easily enough, under the influence of grace, into all the virtues of youth. If it is not the right one, do not delude yourselves with the idea that the Nuns or the Christian Brothers can undo the harm already accomplished. If you have spoiled the boy or girl, the schools can rarely undo the harm, and never wholly. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in *The Scarlet Letter*, has written truly : " Be the stern and sad truth spoken, that the breach which guilt has once made in the human soul is never, in this mortal state, repaired." And the breach which is made in early youth is most difficult to repair. The sin may be pardoned, of course, for God is merciful. But its effects remain, clinging round the soul like water weeds around a luckless swimmer.

The child is entitled to grow up in innocence, and, when this does not happen, someone other than the child is to blame—most of all those careless parents, who either themselves give bad example, or, more frequently, exercise no proper supervision over their children's religious training, and never ask themselves what sort of companions enter their young lives. There is no sadder or more mysterious thing in life than the wholesale blighting of that soul-loveliness which constitutes the specific charm and winsomeness of a child. No wonder that even our Divine Lord's face grew stern, and His words just terrible, when He thought of it : " He that shall scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." What a

pity that we cannot discover these monsters in time, and do that which were better for them! It would be still better for the little ones, and for mankind in general.

I know, of course, that in a world where scandals abound it is not easy to safeguard your children. But God only expects from us the best we can do under the circumstances. And if you do your best you have fulfilled your duty. Only, He is not likely to be content with less than your best where your children's spiritual welfare is concerned.

Parents can err in three ways in their treatment of the children. First, they can neglect them, and let them grow up as wildlings. Second, they can pet and pamper them until they spoil them utterly. The consequence is that the evil tendencies of fallen nature are fostered and stimulated from the start. Need we be astonished, then, that in later years the young man or woman lacks self-restraint, and yields, almost without a struggle, to the seductions of the world? Thirdly, they can treat them with undue severity, repressing all the legitimate aspirations of youth for enjoyment and self-expression. This excess, like every excess, is a fault, and may easily lead later on to a great reaction when youth escapes from a too Spartan home. In older days such homes were not infrequent. At least grey-beards are eloquent on the strict discipline they knew when they were young. But nobody can maintain that Spartan severity is very much in evidence in the homes of to-day. On the contrary, we are living in an era of weak and undignified parenthood, when neither father nor mother seems able to maintain authority.

Hence the young folk of to-day are a good deal out of hand. Thackeray noticed this feature long ago in American life. He wrote:—"Our young Sons of Freedom are publishing their Declaration of Independence before they can well spell it; and cutting the connection with father and mother before they have learned to shave." I am afraid that the whole world has become Americanised in

this respect since then. There are young sons of freedom in all lands now, who publish their declaration of independence before they can spell it. Ay, and young daughters of freedom, of whom the same might be said, except that they, for the most part, never learn to spell. But they *declare* their independence very loudly before they are out of their teens, sometimes even before they are into them. I remember once being called in to talk to a young girl of whom neither father nor mother could make anything. When the fierce insurgent was produced it turned out to be a child of ten with the face of a cherub. I could hardly believe my eyes. I gave what advice I could, and she listened quite demurely. But I do not flatter myself that I made any very permanent impression. And as I came away I felt that the fault could not be wholly with the child. It is too much to ask one to believe that a girl of ten will have grown utterly unmanageable without some criminal slackness on the parents' part.

There is a fairly general impression abroad that the new liberty is intoxicating the growing girl—it is even whispered that sometimes liberty is not the only intoxicant she knows. She is claiming a freedom of action in many ways that her grandmother would have deemed anarchical. She dresses as she likes, defying even the Pope. She goes where she likes, when she likes, with whom she likes, and resents the idea that mother or father or guardian have a right to inquire too closely into her movements. She has the dancing craze to such a degree that her life seems to alternate between the ball-room, where she exhausts her energies, and the couch on which she seeks to recover them for the next dance. The idea of a chaperon excites not so much indignation as laughter, it is so absurdly obsolete. She claims her own latchkey, and can return at any hour of the night in the safe company of her dancing partner, who, if he has not a motor of his own, must hire a taxi, though he can ill afford it. During the dancing—I have heard this on good authority or I would deem it

just incredible—she finds that at the intervals she needs a cocktail to keep her animation from flagging. After that it is superfluous to add such venial items as that she smokes endless cigarettes, knows more of life—by which, for some strange reason, is always meant the seamy side of life—than her mother, and reads all the books that are talked about. (And again books are talked about at present in direct proportion to their dangerous tendency, and in inverse proportion to their literary merit.)

Now, if the picture I have drawn—not from my imagination, for I could not have imagined it, but from the testimony of many level-headed observers—be even approximately true of even a small percentage of young Irish girls—I refuse to believe it true of any more—then it is time there was a decided movement on the part of public opinion to call a stop to the rake's progress. The nation's most precious asset in the past was the high quality of its womanhood. I dislike rhapsodies, and in these pages I have studied to avoid exaggeration. I have no foolish idea that the men or women of the past were all saints or heroes. But I think it strictly and entirely demonstrable that the women of Ireland stood very high among the women of the world. Thackeray in his *Irish Sketch Book*, otherwise bitterly unfair to us, exhausts his vocabulary of praise when speaking of Irish women. And he adds that if he ever brings out a new edition and can find more words to express his admiration he will insert them. For one thing, he says: “They are the most innocent girls in the world.” Would he write so to-day? I really believe, at least I like to believe, he would still write it of the vast majority. But of the minority I have spoken of no honest man could write anything except this advice to all men looking for wives: “Fly from them as from the face of a serpent.” I certainly and unreservedly say to all such men: “If you take a cocktail-drinking danseuse to your home you will find that home an inferno, and further, you will deserve no pity in

your prison-house of shame and pain." I think that, for a wise man, a single cocktail at a single dance ought to settle the matter for ever. This may seem severe. Indeed, I must guard myself from the accusation of an untheological rigorism by admitting that the drinking of a single cocktail does not constitute an unforgiveable sin or any sin at all. It is as a portent that I deem it serious. For I hold obstinately to the belief that the cocktail-drinking girl is only too likely to develop into a dram-drinking wife. And I hold, with still greater obstinacy, that if a drinking husband makes home a purgatory for all beneath the roof, a drinking wife makes it a hell.

There is just another point which I think claims our attention. The children's religious education should begin in the home; but it must be continued in the schools. I may be permitted to quote the words of an American Jesuit: "If we are really to educate the man, we must impart to him a clear, definite and full knowledge of his immortal destiny. For without this knowledge it is as impossible for a human being to develop along right lines as it is impossible for a pilot to guide his vessel successfully to its destination without knowing the location of the port whither he is to tend, or without possessing the ability to read aright the mariner's compass by his side." Answering the question where and when religion should be taught to the boy, he says: "Wherever and whenever a human being is being educated, and as long as he is being educated. Is he being educated at home? Let religion enter there. Is he being educated in the class-room? Let religion enter there. Is he being educated in social life? Let religion enter there."

If this be true, and it is assuredly a principle for which the Church has stood right down its history, what are we to think of those parents who, in a land studded with Catholic schools of every description, entrust the education of their boys or girls to teachers of another faith? In Dublin, with its wealth of Catholic schools, and

first-rate Catholic schools, this scandal has reached such proportions that it has called for public animadversion from his Grace the Archbishop.

Various pretexts are alleged; but they do not stand examination. It is stated that Protestant schools are more efficient. Now, I have no wish to say a word against these. I believe they are quite good, and I hope sincerely they will continue good, and give to the children they were designed for the best education in Europe. But, if they are more efficient, it is rather strange that whenever our schools met them in open competition, whether in studies or in games, honours were not merely divided, but fell preponderatingly to our Catholic schools. I admit these had in many cases the advantage of numbers. But against that, on the other hand, they had the heavy handicap of poverty, and of a population in which an older tradition of learning had been torn up by the roots and replaced by none other. Yet, starting always with the odds heavily against them, they have slowly but surely pushed their way upwards to the highest achievements in every department of school-life. To ask us, then, to believe that Dublin is teeming with youthful prodigies who have nothing to learn in the schools of their own faith is to tax our credulity to the snapping point.

Again, it is said that the non-Catholic schools respect the religion of the children most scrupulously. I know that, and admit it unreservedly. I am sure the masters and mistresses are gentlemen and ladies, who would shrink in horror from any unworthy proselytism. But this does not lessen the danger; rather it increases it. It gives them an unconscious power to act as solvents to all fixed forms of belief, and to encourage the most popular of heretical tenets—namely, that all religions are pretty much alike, and that no-religion-at-all is as good as any of them.

If the truth may be stated without giving offence, the prevailing motive with such parents is an ignoble snobbery. Perhaps in many cases they are not quite conscious of this.

But it requires no great knowledge of psychology to read the underlying currents of thought and emotion. The Catholic schools are large, and there is a danger of social contamination from contact with the children of the mere Irish. Later on, young people from aristocratic areas might have to nod to young men or women, you dare not call them ladies, who had the appalling fate of growing up in less select surroundings. Or, when their school-days are over, they might prefer the National University to Trinity College. And can you imagine anything more terrible than such a choice?

The sad and humiliating truth is that, though the fetters may have largely fallen from the limbs of Catholic Ireland, they are still clinging tenaciously round her soul. We must do our whilom conquerors the credit of admitting that they have had an unholy measure of success in driving their spear-head deep into the quivering flesh of the Catholic community. If it has been extracted, after an unexampled struggle, the wound is still far from being healed. Nor can it ever be healed until we learn to respect ourselves. And I think that only then shall we command the respect of those who must regard with contempt all who ape their manners or court their smiles without belonging to their tradition. The man or woman who is ashamed of being Irish and Catholic deserves disdain, indeed, yet, perhaps, pity most of all.

But to return to our little despot. We must bid him adieu. Sleep, little pilgrim, and may angels guard your slumbers! May they guide your footsteps on the devious ways of a dangerous world. A writer who was very popular when I was a few years older than yourself has addressed these words to such as you :—" Poor little feet just commencing the stony journey ! We, old travellers, far down the road, can only pause to wave a hand to you. . . . God speed you ! We would stay and take your little hands in ours, but the murmur of the great sea is in our ears, and we may not linger. We must hasten down, for

the shadowy ships are waiting to spread their sable sails.” They are waiting for you, too, poor child ; but farther out at sea. *We* feel the cold air and the salt spray blowing in from the great ocean, and we know that the boat-train is nearing the port of call. But what matter, if our land journey has been unattended by disaster ; if we leave the world a little better (and not worse), a little happier (and not more miserable), for our passing through ? And if, when we cross the gangway under the sable sails, we are embarking for “that home beyond home for which we are all home-sick ” ?

Ah, may we all attain that home at last, and Him, “Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,” Who is our home, our only home, in Whom we may hope to meet again the parents’ smile which shone above our cradle, and still goes before us, a Pillar of Light in our Egyptian darkness, across the lonely desert of the years !









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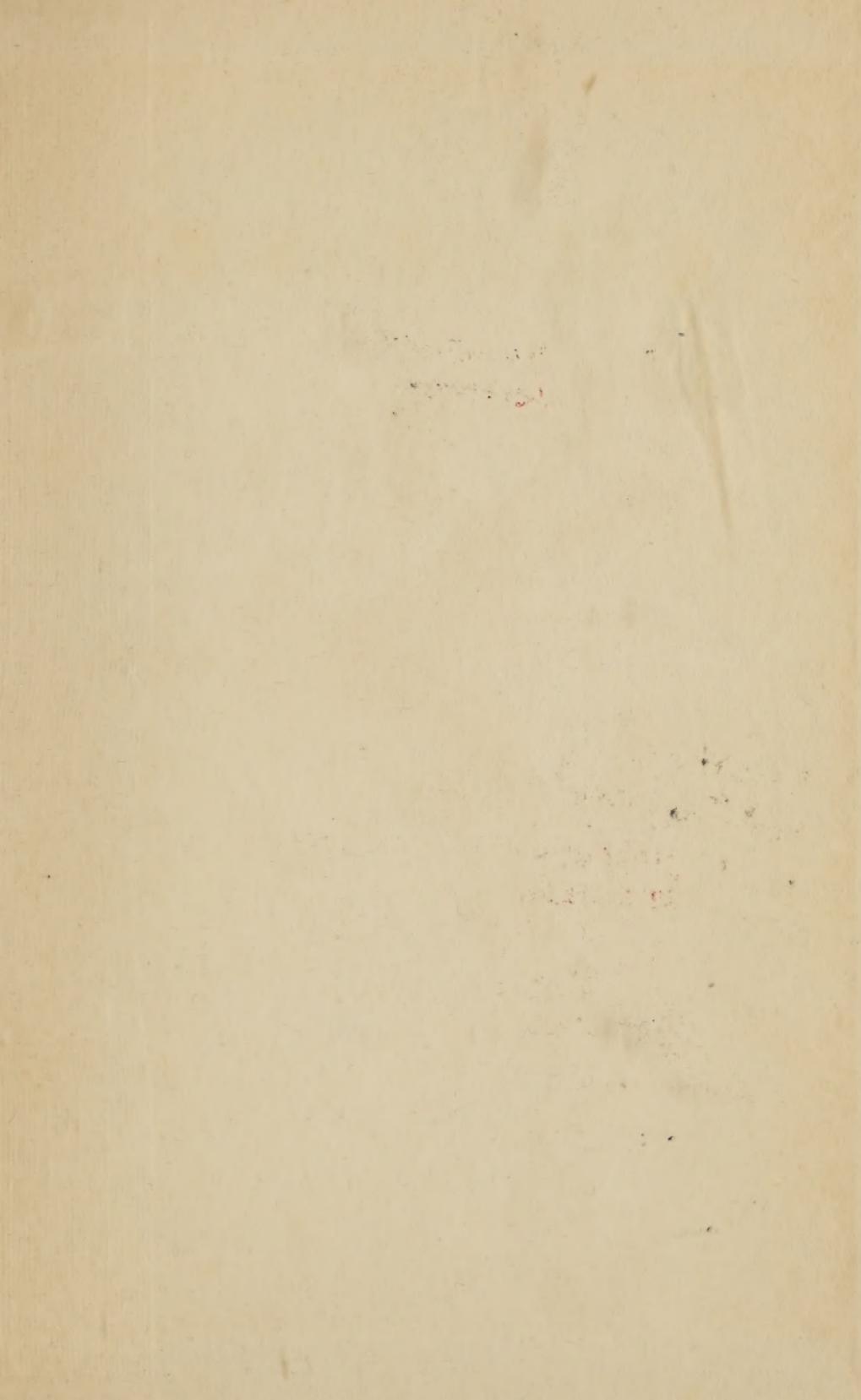
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